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CLASS BOOK FOR JEWISH YOUTH OF BOTH SEXES.

DISCOURSES ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE RELIGIOUS BELIEF OF ISRAEL, AS PRODUCTIVE OF HUMAN HAPPINESS AND MORAL IMPROVEMENT.

THE FORM OF THANKSGIVING FOR JEWISH LADIES ON REPAIRING TO THE SYNAGOGUE AFTER THEIR ACCOUCHMENT.

ANTIQUITY OF FREEMASONRY IN GENERAL.

A SYNOPSIS OF JEWISH HISTORY.

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DISCOURSES

ON THE

BOOK OF GENESIS.

By Rev. H. A. HENRY,
RABBI PREACHER OF CONGREGATION SHERITH ISRAEL, SAN FRANCISCO.

"These studies improve youth, and are the embellishment and joy of age; they add grace and dignity to prosperity, and afford the surest refuge and consolation in adversity; they delight us at home, and are no hindrance to enjoyment abroad; they go to bed with us, travel with us, and are our companions in the country."—*Cicero.*

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DEDICATION.

TO THE

CONGREGATION SHERITH ISRAEL,

STOCKTON STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA:

This Volume of Discourses on the Book of Genesis is inscribed
and dedicated, with the warmest feelings of duty,
affection, and esteem, by their obliged
and faithful Minister,

THE AUTHOR.

226192

PREFACE.

In sending forth this little volume, the author would offer a few remarks as to its design and contents. The necessity of a book like the present for the young is sufficiently obvious, if we consider the great indifference now shown to scriptural study, and the objections urged (not without reason) to the indescriminate use of the Bible, by young persons, as being in many places unsuited to their capacity.

The author hopes that this work will not be liable to such objections, but will, by smoothing the way, rather allure the young to a more intimate acquaintance with the Sacred Volume.

It consists of Twelve Discourses on the Book of Genesis (from the Creation to the death of Joseph), with an Appendix, treating of the prophetical blessings of Jacob to his Children, in which is explained one of the fundamental principles of Jewish faith.

The arrangement of the work into Twelve Discourses is based upon the plan of the Hebrew Bible, in which the Book of Genesis is divided into Twelve Weekly Sections.

To obviate the inconvenience of searching for quotations, they are generally given in full.

A few words as to the Appendix. In the historical portion of the Book, the Authorized English Version has been adopted, its diction being clear and simple, but this could not be done when

dealing with the poetical and metaphorical expressions of the Prophetic Style, as that Version does not convey the ideas of the Original.

For the right comprehension of the Prophetical Blessings of Jacob, a new rendering was therefore indispensable. Should the author thereby succeed in rectifying any popular errors springing from that Version, he shall consider that he has not labored in vain; but if otherwise, he shall feel happy to be convinced that none exist.

The author intends to continue the Discourses to the end of the Pentateuch; but his doing so will of course depend on the encouragement this, the first volume, will receive.

San Francisco, January, 5624—1864.

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DISCOURSE I.

FROM THE FIRST CHAPTER OF GENESIS TO THE END OF THE EIGHTH VERSE IN THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

My dear young Friends:—

In setting out to explain the text of our Holy Law, it may be expedient to inform you that the sacred Volume is called the "Five Books of Moses," or the Pentateuch," and that the subjects of which it treats are of different kinds; some being historical, describing the Creation of the World—the first ages of Man—the Deluge and the subsequent events, that occurred to one branch of mankind, viz., the posterity of Abraham; others, legislative and ethical, containing various laws, statutes, and moral rules for the guidance of Man in general, as well as several prophecies, and sacred songs, and anthems.

The entire volume was written by Moses, the Divine Legislator, through the inspiration of God. This is explicitly stated in the fifth volume as follows: "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book until they were finished." Deuteronomy 31: 24.

How thankful ought we to be for this precious gift of Almighty God, and how gratefully should our hearts acknowledge the gracious kindness of the Lord for the emanation of this glorious light to our forefathers, through whom it has descended to us for our guidance through life! "For the Commandment is a lamp and the Law is light." Proverbs 6: 23. "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." Proverbs 3: 18.

This volume, called in Hebrew the "Torah," commences with an account of the Creation of the World. And nothing can afford a stronger proof of its divine origin than the plain yet noble description of the Universe, called forth from nothing by the mere word of the Almighty, so beautifully expressed by the sweet Psalmist of Israel. "By the word of the Lord were the Heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Psalms 33: 6.

This is a circumstance we must ever look up to with awe and veneration, and which cannot fail to impress us with a due respect for the ordinances of the sacred Writings.

The Book of Genesis opens with these words: "In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth," or, in other terms, God first created the Universe, or caused the materials to come forth for the formation of the Heavens, and all their Hosts, and for the earth and all its productions. "And the Earth was without form and void." The elements were all called into existence, but as yet no arrange-

ment of parts had taken place, for until now "Darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." In this state of indiscribable chaos, "God said, let there be light; and there was Light."

What a change! What an illustrious moment must that have been, when from non-existence this mighty globe on which we dwell, and the surrounding Heavens were called into active existence! The Word of God made light burst forth with splendor and dispelled all darkness. This astonishing change was immediately distinguished by the Almighty, who gave to light the title of "*day*," while darkness was called "*night*." "And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night." Gen. 1: 5. These distinct states, considered as one portion of time, were denominated "*one day*," or the *first* day.

On the *Second* day, the sky—or that part of the air immediately above us, called the atmosphere—was created; this lies under the circle of the Sun, Moon, and Planets, and is the seat of the waters within which the clouds containing rain are formed.

On the *Third* day, the waters on the earth under the firmament or atmosphere were commanded to gather themselves together, so as to become Seas and Rivers. Dry land thus began to appear, and immediately, at the command of God, all kinds of grass, herbs, and trees commenced to grow in full perfection.

On the *Fourth* day, the Almighty arranged the

Sun, Moon, and Planets in their proper order; the Sun to emit its brilliant light by day, and the Moon and Stars to shed their rays by night; and so wonderfully and unchangeably are their motions regulated, that they serve to mark the times and seasons for ever.

On the *Fifth* day, Fish, Worms, and other animals were created to live in the water, and Birds were formed to fly in the air.

On the *Sixth* day, Animals, Wild Beasts, Reptiles, and all kinds of Insects were created to inhabit the earth. The Universe being now constructed, the heavenly Bodies regularly proceeding in their appointed Course, the Earth yielding its productions, the animals inhabiting the Air, the Water, or the Earth—Nature's Laws established and in full action —the Lord declared his intention to create *Man*, a being entirely different from those already in existence. It is remarkable, that in the relation made, the terms employed are all expressive of the source whence the several creatures were ordered to be derived; for example, the fish and other aquatic animals, were commanded to be brought forth by the Waters—"And God said, let the Waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life." All Land animals, beasts, etc., by the Earth—"Let the Earth bring forth the living Creature after its kind." But Man, who was to be the Lord of all this Creation and to be composed in a way different from all other creatures, is, accordingly, announced in a manner

different from all the rest, and with a preparation which marks him as the master-piece of the Creation. The Almighty declares that the creature now about to be created shall be a compound superior to all those heretofore brought forth at his command from the earth or from the waters. From materials furnished by the Earth, he is to be formed by God's own hand with a portion of the Divine Spirit superadded; thus giving two sources, as it were, for man's formation, viz.: for his body, the Earth; for his soul, the Spirit of God—"And God said, 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness'"—a creature materially superior to all the brute creation, a being endowed with a spiritual and reasonable soul, and with a capacity of attaining the God-like faculties of understanding and reason, as expressed in the words, "And God created Man in his own image." The expression "*in his own image*" is not to be literally understood as the *image* of God, for we know full well, that the Omnipotent is a spiritual Being, not of any precise form, figure, or image. The term is only metaphorically employed to distinguish *Man's* upright form, as well as being indicative of his spiritual and rational mind.

"Male and female created he them. And God blessed them." This blessing is here given to mankind in general at his creation, for although the special formation of the human female is not related until afterwards, still the species was at that time formed, and the destination of the two sexes throughout all future time, determined at that period.

Such is the condensed and true account of the Creation of the World—an account which must cause us to admire the wisdom and power of the Creator; and produce in man an entire submission and pious veneration. How beautifully and justly does King David exclaim:

"The Heavens declare the Glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." Psalm 19: 1–3.

The next passage we shall notice is, that which teaches us, that the Seventh day was already thus early consecrated as the Sabbath, a rest day for man, to be devoted to religious Worship.

"Thus the Heavens and the Earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the Seventh day God ended his Work which he had made; and he rested on the Seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the Seventh day, and sanctified it; because in it he had rested from all his Work which God Created and made." Genesis 2: 1–3.

Let us well consider this Circumstance and place it in its proper light; the Work of God is not like the Work of man; no actual rest was required by the Almighty, who had merely uttered the Word, and produced the Universe, with all its wonderful machinery.

The Almighty cannot necessarily be limited to the employment of six days to effect what one word might do in an instant. *No*—this arrangement was not the effect of necessity; it was designed for important purposes, and has many typical meanings.

The Creator of the Universe has from the beginning of time established the Laws of nature, which are indispensably ordained to proceed in their regular course. Thus, we observe that after having settled the elements, God directed every thing to act according to the course allotted to it. The Sun and heavenly bodies were designed to regulate time; the Earth to bring forth grass, herbs, and trees; and the Waters to breed fish and other animals to live therein. Thus, in the very outset of the Creation we observe the establishment of order and regularity. God sets the example of resting on the Seventh day, preparatory to the institution of the Sacred observance of the "Sabbath"—an observance afterwards fixed upon, as a Sign for the Children of Israel, to evince their belief and Conviction that the Creation of the World *is* the Work of the Almighty, incorporeal and Omniscent God. This ordinance we find specially noticed in Exodus: "And the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their Generations for a perpetual Covenant. It is a Sign between me and the Children of Israel forever; for in Six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, and on the Seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." Exodus 31: 16, 17.

Let us, therefore, always bear in mind that the Sacred observance of the "*Sabbath*" is a Sign and a proof of our faith and Conviction that Almighty God, Supreme in power, in Wisdom, and in Greatness, is the beneficent Creator of the Universe, and all which it containeth.

The History now proceeds to describe the delightful retreat formed for the residence of this newly created man, who was called *Adam*, in the Hebrew, because "he was formed from the dust of the ground." Placed in this happy spot, he observed the great variety of Beasts and living creatures around him, and gave them all names after their kinds; at the same time, he became sensible that among all these, there could not be found a companion fitted for himself—even the gracious Creator made the remark, "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him." Gen. 2: 18.

The Almighty then caused a deep sleep to overcome Adam, and formed a Woman from one of the ribs taken from his side; so that when he awoke, he perceived this newly born Creature. He then felt a delight and gratitude greater than he could express; he felt himself immediately attached by a powerful love and affection towards her. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." Gen. 2: 23.

This happy pair were now placed in the "*Garden of Eden*," wherein every necessary, as well as luxu-

ry, of life, grew of its own accord, and where perfect happiness awaited them. They were, at the same time, put on their guard, and made to understand that they must submit to certain Laws and regulations. They were forbidden to eat of a particular Tree which stood in the midst of the Garden, called "*The Tree of Knowledge*," although they were allowed to eat of the fruit of every other tree that grew in that beautiful and delightful spot.

It might be imagined that nothing could have been more easy than the observance of this simple rule; and the presence of God, we should suppose, would have been sufficient to prevent a breach of this Command. But, alas! it proved otherwise. The Serpent, a sly and Cunning Animal, made the Woman believe that she was mistaken, and had misunderstood the matter, and that if she even did eat of the tree, she would, nevertheless, not immediately die, as had been declared by the Almighty; that the fruit was delightful to the taste, and that it had the faculty of imparting Wisdom to the person who should eat of it. By such arguments, she was not only persuaded to eat of the forbidden fruit herself, but even enticed Adam to do likewise. No sooner had this fatal act of disobedience taken place, than the ill-effects of such Conduct became evident, and the first Consequence of this sinfully-acquired Knowledge, was, to feel shame.

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed

fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Gen. 3 : 7.

Hitherto, they had been innocent Creatures, without any idea of evil, walking about without care or trouble; but now, their position became different—they had transgressed—they became susceptible of their disgrace, and were desirous of hiding themselves; they endeavored to cover their nakedness with fig leaves,—but they could not cover the nakedness of their souls;—they could not quiet their conscience, and punishment soon overtook them. The Righteous-judging God called them to account, taxed them with their Guilt, and immediately pronounced their sentence. In the first place, God punished the Serpent, who had tempted them, saying, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and every beast of the field; upon thy belly thou shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The Sentence of the Woman was as follows: "I will greatly multiply thy Sorrow and thy Conception; in Sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy Husband, and he shall rule over thee." And, lastly, Adam's punishment was proclaimed, in these words: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee,

saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: Cursed is the Ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

Adam and Eve were then banished from Paradise, and sent abroad into a world of sorrow and trouble. It would be proper here to claim due attention to the terrible Consequences which have resulted from their disobedience.

The great and good God originally created *Man* as the most perfect of his Creatures, and placed him in Paradise as an innocent and Godlike Being, nearly approaching the perfection of Angels. For wise purposes, God gave to man a free will, that he might act as he thought proper, and in order to try his obedience, forbade his eating of one particular tree. Inconsiderate Man, however, disobeyed, and did eat of this forbidden fruit; in consequence of which, he immediately lost the enjoyment of that happy and innocent state, and was justly punished by being cast into this troublesome world to combat his passions and evil propensities.

For his guidance and instruction, however, the All-merciful Creator has most graciously revealed to man the "Law," to shew him the paths of righteousness wherein he should walk.

"It is thy life, and the length of thy days."

This portion of the Sacred Volume is replete with divine truths, which require and have excited, the deep Consideration of Mankind in all ages.

Many of the Wise Men of old have reasoned upon

and explained the subject. I, therefore, only attempt to make the relation somewhat clear to your young minds, that you may acquire the outline of the history recorded by Moses, the faithful servant of the Lord.

Grant, O Lord, that our hearts may not be misled by our passions or false teachings. May we ever be inclined to act according to thy will, and coerce our desires to be subservient to thee; to observe thy statutes, and serve thee with a perfect heart, for, from thee alone, emanate all the blessings of life. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

From the Ninth Verse of the Sixth Chapter to the End of the Eleventh Chapter.

My dear young Friends :—

When explaining the subject of the former discourse, I had but time to call your attention to the Wonders of the Creation, to raise your admiration, and excite your veneration for the Almighty Creator of all things. I shall now therefore proceed briefly to comment upon the historical part therein contained, and connect it with the theme of the present discourse. The Bible, in giving the outline of the history of the early ages of mankind, and marking out their progress, confines itself principally to that branch only, which leads us to our immediate ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, preparatory to which, it gives an account of the most astonishing and terrible punishment ever inflicted on the human race.

You have already been informed that Adam and Eve were punished for their disobedience, and driven from the delightful "Garden of Paradise," to sojourn in this world of trouble and turmoil, and to obtain

their subsistence by dint of hard labor. They soon experienced the hardship of their state; the knowledge of good and evil which they had acquired by eating the forbidden fruit soon proved a source of misfortune to themselves as well as to the whole human family. Here, we see that evil passions too often gain the ascendency over the wholesome dictates of reason, and thus man falls a prey to all their evil consequences.

Adam begat two sons, Cain and Abel, the first of whom, in a fit of jealousy and envy, killed his brother. The history runs thus: "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Genesis 4: 3–5. This caused Cain to be jealous of his brother Abel, and when they were walking together in the field, Cain rose up and slew his brother Abel. The story of Cain and Abel must appear very shocking—a man to murder his own brother! It makes one shudder to think of it. You see to what a state of wickedness a person may arrive, who indulges an envious temper. Abel seems to have been of an amicable and religious disposition, for you find he was in favor with God; Cain, on the contrary, was of a morose, jealous temper, which caused him to commit so foul a deed as to murder his own brother. His wickedness could

not be concealed from the knowledge of God, nor could he escape the punishment merited by such an act. Cain was then banished from the society of man, doomed to be a forlorn wanderer and a fugitive, and liable to be devoured by the beasts of the field for his brutal conduct. Cain became truly sensible of his miserable condition, and confessed to the Lord the justness of his punishment, which was even greater than he could bear; and when God found that he became penitent, he put a mark upon Cain, so that man or beast finding him should not slay him. Cain afterwards mixed in the world, as it is stated in the Bible that he dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

Adam afterwards begat Sheth, and more sons and daughters. They and their descendants peopled the world. They gradually became civilized, and one Jabal, a son of Lamech, is mentioned as the first who led a settled life—fixed his tents and fed his flocks. His brother Jubal invented musical instruments, and another brother, Tubal-Cain, discovered the method of working in copper and iron.

Mankind went on thus multiplying and improving for ten successive generations. This account brings us down to the period of the Deluge! Before relating that memorable event, I must call your attention to one good and pious man, remarkable for the age in which he lived, viz.: Enoch, who "walked with God, and was no more, for God took him;" by which we understand, that as a reward for his exemplary piety, he was received into heaven.

This fact ought to encourage us to the utmost diligence in the service of our great Creator, who so bountifully rewards his faithful followers.

At the end of the tenth generation, as the people became more settled, so, unfortunately, they became more wicked.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." Genesis 6: 5–7.

A more shocking and revolting picture of wickedness cannot well be conceived! One man, however, among the mass of wicked people was found to have conducted himself differently, and that was Noah, who "was a just man and perfect in his generations, and who walked with God." Hence, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Him, therefore, did God, in his mercy, select as worthy to be saved from destruction, and to lay the foundation of a new race of men. Noah had inherited pious and religious sentiments from his immediate ancestors. His great-grandfather was Enoch, of whom we have already spoken as being so holy a man "*that God took him to himself;*" and his grandfather Methuselah, who

lived the longest of any human being, was also a very pious man. These men no doubt had given Noah instructions in the fear of God, and were an example for him, whose conduct, thus guided, became sufficient to merit the favor which the Almighty extended to him in preference to all the rest of mankind.

To Noah, therefore, did the Almighty think fit to impart his intention of punishing mankind.

"And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the Earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under Heaven; and every thing that is in the Earth shall die." Genesis 6: 17.

Noah was then commanded to build the Ark, which was a kind of covered Barge, large enough to contain himself, his Wife, his three Sons and their Wives, as well as one pair, that is to say, a male and female of all those living creatures termed "not Clean," not domestic Animals, and seven pairs of every kind of domestic or Clean Animals; and to collect sufficient food for all while shut up in the Ark. A labor like this must naturally be supposed to have occupied a great length of time. Yet we find that the people around him, however curious they may have been about this extraordinary work in which Noah was engaged, were heedless of its purpose, and even ridiculed it. They would not take warning from his preaching, nor did they believe him when he foretold that their punishment would be their total destruction. The Ark completed, God thought fit to give yet further time to mankind to reflect and turn from

their wicked ways. God directed Noah to prepare himself in due season; and in order to convince the people that the threatened punishment would certainly take place, he told him to go into this Vessel of Safety with his family, and all the animals before mentioned; then, as a further warning, he declared, "Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the Earth forty days and forty nights; and every living Substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth." Genesis 7 : 4.

Noah obeyed; the seven days passed, and a most tremendous rain showered down upon the Earth. The whole World became inundated with a flood. Houses were washed away; trees uprooted; Man, Woman, child, beast, bird, and reptile, all perished in this terrible and overwhelming mass of Water! Nothing escaped except those preserved in the Ark. Thus, did every living Creature perish! Thus, was every production of the earth destroyed! The whole beauty of Creation lost, and the World threatened with the return to its original state of chaos! How dreadful is such a Contemplation! How tremendously does it evince the power of the Almighty! How overpowering is the awe which it occasions, and what a terrible view of the effects of disobedience to the Divine Will is presented! What poor, helpless beings are we without God's especial care! How much ought we dread his anger! Yet, with all this, God is a gracious God, for much as mankind, through their wickedness, deserved to be swept away from the

Earth and utterly destroyed, yet, God in his mercy preserved one family that was virtuous, together with a sufficient stock of Animals for food, to repeople the world, that a future generation should arise to acknowledge his justice and prove grateful for his unbounded goodness. Whoever reads the account of this awful event must feel greatly affected. What a striking instance of God's power and mercy towards those who truly love and serve him! Eight persons only in the whole World were found righteous before Him, and these he preserved; whilst the thousands of the Wicked were overwhelmed by the destructive flood of Waters! In vain did the Wicked fly to the highest mountains to save themselves; the wrath of God overtook them; but his faithful Servants remained safe under his protection; neither the large body of Waters which issued from the Centre of the Earth, the torrents that poured from the Clouds, nor the raging Sea, with its mighty waves, were permitted to hurt them, but they safely floated on the Surface of the Water, without one effort on their part for their own preservation! The rain continued to pour down in torrents during forty days and forty nights, and the Waters continued to rage during one hundred and fifty days, after which, they began to diminish, and the Ark, which had been swimming about during this time, at length rested on the hills of Ararat. This took place on the seventeenth day of the seventh month from the commencement of the flood. Nearly three months more elapsed before the tops of the

mountains became visible. The first appearance of which, was on the tenth day of the tenth month. Noah opened the Window of the Ark to look about him, but alas! he beheld no dry land, nothing save an immense expanse of water. He then waited forty days, and sent forth a Raven (which he knew would naturally seek some habitable spot), to discover if such a thing existed, but failing to find anything of the kind, it returned and pitched upon the top of the Ark, where it remained and flew about from time to time till the Earth became dry.

Noah having waited seven days longer, sent out a Dove (who would naturally seek for trees), to make some discovery, but it came back to the Ark without any better success than the raven.

Seven days more having expired, Noah sent the Dove out again, when it returned with an olive leaf in its mouth, which was evidently a Sign that the Waters were subsiding. He thereupon waited another seven days, and again sent forth the same bird, which, however, did not return. Noah felt now convinced that the Waters must have receded, and that the dove must have found a resting-place. He, therefore, on the first day of the first month in the following year, uncovered the Ark, and on the twenty-seventh day of the second month he quitted it, having found that the Earth had become dry. So, that the time during which Noah and his family had been shut up was not less than one year and ten days. Now, my young friends, let us pause and reflect on this terrible occurrence, and consider what it teaches us.

As the history of the Creation of so beautiful a Universe, from nothing, made us acquainted with the Omnipotence of God, so does the history of the flood point out the tremendous effects of his anger. It also proves a system of reward and punishment; for we hereby perceive, that all mankind were destroyed on account of their wickedness, while Noah alone was preserved, as a reward for his virtue and piety.

We may also learn from this history, that God does sometimes vouchsafe to give warning to mankind, in order to rouse their repentance and induce them to amend their ways. For this purpose, he selects some virtuous mortal as the bearer of his Divine will and intentions.

On this occasion, Noah was the favored individual. And had the people attended to the warning given by Noah, who, in their presence, was occupied in building the Ark and fitting it up as a permanent Residence for himself and family—had they listened to his advice, and thought of the punishment that awaited them—had they followed the good example before them—no doubt the judgment would have been suspended, and the flood never have taken place. How requisite, then, for mankind particularly to notice every circumstance in life, which may serve as a warning. They should at all times endeavor to act so as to avoid exciting the anger of the Lord, to punish them for their misdeeds. Let us, moreover, never disregard the admonitions of our Teachers, but reflect and take example from the

history of former times, and not fail to put our trust in God. "For He is a merciful and gracious God." This history serves also as a great argument for, and proof of, the truth of all that is related in our Holy Bible; for without admitting this fact, that the world and all its inhabitants were drowned in the flood, and that everything was thrown into disorder and confusion, we should not be able to account for the many wonderful things which are daily discovered in all parts of the world. We read of large quantities of sea-shells (such as oysters, and other shell-fish, and of petrified fishes) being often found at a great depth under ground, in places many hundred miles distant from the sea. These could never have reached such situations had they not been left behind from some inundation long past. Many rocks on the shores of the seas of different countries have the same nature and the same appearance as those of other countries lying opposite. For instance, the chalk Cliffs of Dover, in England, appear as if they had been part of the Cliffs of Calais in France, and that the sea had burst through and separated them, which could only have occurred by a great convulsion of nature; and even now, discoveries are made from day to day of this wonderful event. All these facts go to prove the truth of the history of the Deluge; and those who have traveled round the globe have reported that there are visible proofs of it remaining in the earth at this time. History also shows us, that almost every nation in the world has

some tradition concerning the flood as stated in the Bible. All this must increase our wonder and admiration at the immense power of God, and it should therefore excite our devotion and veneration. The promulgation of our Holy Law which imparts to us this fact, among others so astonishing and so instructive, claims our gratitude. Truly said the Royal Songster, "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." Psalms 19: 7.

Noah and his family having now, by command of the Lord, quitted the Ark, were deeply impressed with awe and gratitude for their miraculous preservation, and with a corresponding feeling, Noah immediately raised an altar, and offered up burnt sacrifices as thanksgivings to the Almighty for his gracious providence to them.

But dreary and waste was the appearance of the Earth, as it arose from the retiring waters; a uniform, dark, muddy mass, stripped of all its pristine beauty. No enlivening green sward—no various-colored flowers now decked its surface—no beautifully bright insect or elegantly colored fly, reflecting the bright rays of the Sun, now skimmed along to give variety to its dull and gloomy aspect. The sight was appalling, and the consideration of the cause thereof was even still worse. The kind and beneficent nature of the Divine Creator deplored the miserable scene. How emphatic is the sentiment of regret expressed at the horrible effects of this punishment inflicted on that imperfect creature, Man, who

yet possessed faculties enabling him to deserve a better fate!

"And the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done." Genesis 8: 21.

The Lord then in his mercy condescended to comfort the human race, and declared to them "While the Earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Genesis 8: 22.

And as an assurance of this, God commanded a beautiful rainbow to shine forth with all its admirable colors, which he declares shall be considered as "a token of the Covenant, that the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh," but as on another occasion God expressed it, Man shall be judged according to his deeds. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Exodus 33: 19.

Yet, however grateful, Noah might have felt for having been exempt from this general destruction, he still saw that his situation and that of his family was far from being comfortable, or even safe. Alone in the world, bereft of all friends, relations, and companions, all pleasure was gone. They were even exposed to be themselves the prey of the very animals and beasts they had fed and nourished. They feared also that they would die from hunger, since

all vegetable matter, and fruit of every description which up to that time had been their only subsistence, were all destroyed, and in the course of nature some time must necessarily elapse before any more could possibly grow again. They did not know, and could not tell, but that in the scarcity of food quarrels might arise among them, and they might destroy each other to satisfy their hunger. All these considerations must have made them truly miserable, even to the extent that they might possibly have to lament having been preserved, to suffer such troubles. But the Lord of all Creation who knows the thoughts of man, at once gave them Comfort in this trying hour by a Blessing, declaring to them: "Be ye fruitful and multiply," whereby their lonely and forlorn state would be relieved; and further declared that all beasts and birds should have a natural fear and dread of man. Such enunciations were well calculated to remove all apprehensions of fear from their minds. In order to provide them with plenty of provisions, God now for the first time ordained animal food to be the sustenance of man. Yet, by giving this license to man, to kill animals for food, the wise Creator was aware that the habit of shedding blood might become mischievous, and that the unbridled passions of man might urge the shedding of human blood with as much indifference as if it were that of a beast. God therefore accompanied this license to kill animals for food, with a stringent law prohibiting the shedding of Human blood. It was particularly

and pointedly directed, to prevent a disposition to cruelty in any shape or manner even to an animal. It was forbidden in these words: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat," which means, ye shall not cut a limb from a living animal and eat thereof, as was the practice in the East at that time. Hence also is derived the law prohibiting the eating of Blood in any shape whatever; and in order fully to carry out this Law, the Israelites soak their meat in water, and afterwards sprinkle it with salt, so that every particle of Blood should be properly extracted from the meat, before it may be eaten.

Noah's family thus comforted, settled themselves, and increased in number; and thus the world became again repeopled. This Noah lived to see, having reached the age of nine hundred and fifty years, a period of life which however common before the deluge was never afterwards attained. We find that after the flood, it pleased the Almighty to contract the lives of men, upon which, if we seriously reflect, we ought to consider as an act of mercy; for though long life would certainly be a blessing to the world in general, provided all persons employed their time properly, in acts of piety to God and benevolence to their fellow-creatures; yet it must prove far otherwise when "all flesh had become corrupted, and the earth was filled with violence." You read, that they had abused the gift of God to so great a degree that "he repented having made men on the earth."

The generations which followed dispersed themselves into various countries, and we may even at this day trace the origin of all the nations of the Earth to some one or other of the successors of Noah who are mentioned in the Bible. The whole mass of the people, however, had but one language, and many cities were built near Babel, where Nimrod, famous for his powers in the chase, was a chieftain.

The people who inhabited this part of the country were instigated by pride to aggrandize themselves above their neighbors. For this purpose, they fixed upon a plain called Shinar as a suitable place to carry out their object. They set about erecting an immense high Tower. "And they said, go to, let us build us a City and a Tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Gen. 11: 4. The intention of the Almighty was, however, quite different. It was destined that Mankind should be spread about in all climates, and that they should people every part of the Globe. These foolish people did not consider that as they multiplied, the country they then inhabited would neither be able to contain nor maintain them. The remembrance of the terrible Deluge was quite worn away! They had become overcharged with pride, and began to forget the God that created them. It was therefore high time that the purposes of Providence should be fulfilled, and a more ready way could not have been devised than, as the Lord

said, "Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Genesis 11: 7. And the consequence naturally followed, that as soon as they could not understand each other, all union of sentiment and harmony of action ceased. The continuance of the work was of course quite impossible. A division of the people was the result, every one departing to settle himself and his family in another place; and thus it was that Mankind became distributed in different parts of the world.

In this short way we are made acquainted with the manner of the beginning of Society, and the establishment of the several Nations who inhabit the different Countries and speak different Languages. A careful perusal of the History recording all these facts should tend to excite our admiration of that power that created the Universe and that so graciously superintends its progress. May we ever be sensible of the goodness of our Heavenly Father, and have at all times a proper reverence for his divine greatness, and thus be continually disposed to serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; for if we seek him, he will be found, but if we forsake him we shall be cast off for ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

FROM THE FIRST VERSE OF THE TWELFTH CHAPTER TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

My dear young Friends:—

The history of the early ages of mankind, we must observe, relates only to that particular branch leading to the Generations of the Patriarchs, from whom the entire nation of Israel sprang, and whose descendants are the Jews of the present day.

The Bible relates, in general terms, the history of the several families descended from Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, who, after the Confusion of Languages at the building of the Tower of Babel, were dispersed, and settled in different parts of the world. It continues further to detail the particulars of the family of Shem, which we shall find to be the line whence our praiseworthy forefather, Abram, sprang. The history of that virtuous and God-fearing Patriarch forms the subject which this portion of the Bible commences.

In the ages immediately succeeding the Deluge, and more especially after the Confusion of Lan-

guages, mankind spread and adopted different modes of life. Some fixed themselves in tents, and some led a pastoral life, feeding their flocks and wandering from place to place as pasture could be found.

We find that the greatest portion of the people in the world, at this period, were idolators. They worshiped, sacrificed, and prayed to any and every thing, but the true God.

The cause of this may be easily explained. By their constant observance of the wonders of nature, impressed, as they must have been, with the tradition and abiding effects of the Deluge, they naturally must have felt convinced of the necessary existence of a Supreme Power, regulating and ruling the world, a Creator giving life to man and animals, causing the Earth to produce, the Sun to shine, the Moon and Planets to run their several courses, night to follow day, and Winter to succeed Summer. They, however, possessed no clue, nor guide to direct them, who, or what this exalted power could be; they saw and felt the effects of the objects which surrounded them, but could not discover the cause. They consequently set their imaginations to work to account for it; some supposed that the luminous heavenly bodies, in constant motion and at an immeasurable distance from the Earth, must be gods, and accordingly they worshiped the Sun or planets; some venerated certain animals, as the cow, dog, lamb, in fact all sorts of beasts and birds, and many other productions of nature; some, again, made different

kinds of images as representatives of the gods or the powers which they imagined to exist, and worshiped them accordingly. To the latter belonged Terah, the father of Abram, a manufacturer of these idols. Abraham, however, was a man of sense and deep reflection; he very soon, by the force of his reason, perceived the folly of men worshiping images made of wood and stone, and venerating them as gods. Abram made up his mind that there must be a superior power who created and regulated the Universe, but whose nature was far beyond human comprehension. He felt grieved at the ignorance and folly of his fellowmen, and openly declared his opinion on the subject. Eminent himself in all exemplary virtues, he was the first who undertook to rectify the erroneous opinions men entertained of the Supreme Being, by instructing them in the nature of His attributes, and inculcating the Doctrine that there could be but one God, to whose providence men were indebted for all the enjoyments of life, independent of any merit or power of their own. In order effectually to carry out his noble design, and in defiance of all opposition to his views, by the people around him, and fearless of the consequences, Abram ventured boldly and openly to destroy the idols which these men worshiped.

There is even a tradition of his having, on that account, been prosecuted by the Government and condemned to be cast into a fiery furnace, from which, however, he came out unhurt, being saved by a mira-

cle from God. To Abram, a man of so exalted a mind, so pious and virtuous, the Almighty vouchsafed to appear, and commanded him to leave the land of his birth, saying: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the Earth be blessed." Genesis 12 : 1–3.

This communication from the Almighty to Abram was a great mark of the favorable light in which he was held, and the command was a strong trial of his faith. It was no small matter for a man, with his wife and family, to quit his country, his friends and relatives, to leave all society, and to wander into strange and uncultivated lands, where, even if he met with inhabitants, it was doubtful whether his life would be safe. Yet, such was the trust that Abram had in his God, so strong was his confidence, and so deep his veneration for His commands, that nothing could withhold him from obeying. Abram, without the least hesitation, immediately left his native home and set out, journeying from place to place. He built an altar wherever he took up his abode, that he might fully express his faith by offering up sacrifices and prayers to God for his marvelous deliverance out of the hands of his enemies.

Here we should learn a lesson—namely, a ready obedience to the will of God, though it may appear contrary to our worldly interests.

And Abram took his family and traveled into the land of Canaan. God, who was well pleased with his ready obedience, again appeared to him, and for his encouragement, declared that the land whereto he had gone, was the land his children should inherit. A dreadful famine happening at this time in Canaan, compelled Abram to quit for a time this land and go into Egypt. This was another trial of his faith. New difficulties beset him; he was again obliged to break up his household and wander in quest of food; but his courage did not fail. He put his entire trust in God, and this faith proved of great benefit to him, for in Egypt the King seized his wife Sarai, and took her from him, but by the miraculous interference of the Almighty, she was soon restored to him, and he was sent away with many presents from the King, and then returned to Canaan.

His cattle having now become so numerous, it became necessary for his nephew, Lot, who had hitherto lived with him, and who also possessed large herds of cattle, to part from him to seek other pastures. Lot, therefore, went on towards Jordan and settled with his family in a place called Sodom. Uncle and nephew parted from each other in the most friendly manner. Lot was indebted to his uncle for all that he possessed. Yet, Abram did not demand any thing from him, but kindly let him have

all he desired. If all relations were as ready to accommodate each other, there would be much more peace and harmony than are at present to be found in the world! No language can do justice to the conduct of Abram, in this instance. A noble example for you, my young friends, to be at all times generous, and not avaricious, in your desires for worldly benefits. After the departure of Lot, the Almighty again appeared to Abram and renewed his promise, that the country wherein he was, should be given as an inheritance to his children, who should become as the dust of the earth, which cannot be numbered.

Abram now settled "in the plains of Mamre," where he built an altar in honor of his God. It is worthy of observation, that this appears to have been his invariable practice upon every removal, so that it is evident how the mind of the Patriarch was continually intent upon Religion, that wheresoever he went he never neglected his duty; but appointed a place for worship and sacrifice to that Great and Spiritual Being whom he adored, and respecting whom, he no doubt preached, and thereby enlightened the surrounding nations. His conduct ensured him the favor of the Almighty, and respect from his neighbors—and thus it was, that he soon became as powerful as he was good.

While Abram dwelt in peace, enjoying the favor of God, in the plains of Mamre, Lot, by his situation was exposed to all the horrors of war. Certain

Kings united and made war upon the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. The latter were defeated in the Vale of Siddim. The Victors then plundered the Country where Lot dwelt, and took him with all his household captive. When the news of his Nephew's misfortune came to the knowledge of Abram, the compassionate Uncle determined to rescue him. He armed his Servants, three hundred and eighteen in number, and calling in the assistance of his neighbors, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, he hastened with all the ardor of a veteran soldier in pursuit of the plunderers. By his wise and brave conduct Abram succeeded in rescuing the vanquished and their dominions from the hands of their invaders, and procured the restoration of all the property, as well as that of his Kinsman Lot. Having recovered Lot and all the captives, together with the spoil, Abram returned in triumphant satisfaction, having performed a noble and generous deed. On the way, he was met by the King of Sodom, who gratefully offered him the whole of the spoil, asking him only to restore the captives. But Abram with a spirit of noble generosity, unparalleled in history, refused to accept a single article. He was happy in having rescued the distressed; he wanted no better reward than the approbation of his own Conscience. His language, in reply to the offer of the King of Sodom is most solemn and devout:

"I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of Heaven and Earth.

That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich. Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." Genesis 14: 22–24.

This stipulation on behalf of his Confederates was strictly just; for though Abram might yield his own right, he could not properly give up that of others. But before he made this generous Concession, he gave a present to Melchizedeck King of Salem, and priest of the most high God. The present was a tenth of the spoil. From this last act of Abram, originated the paying of Tithes. Melchizedeck then pronounced a Blessing on Abram which was striking and dignified: "Blessed be Abram, of the most high God, possessor of Heaven and Earth. And blessed be the most high God who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." Genesis 14: 19, 20.

Soon after this event, Abram was favored with another heavenly vision, in which the Lord said unto him, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Abram, however, modestly urges that his actions are not instigated by the hope of reward, but from pure piety, for he had nothing to expect. He then affectionately appeals to the Lord, saying, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this

Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed; and lo, one born in my house is mine heir." But the Almighty here assures the Patriarch to the contrary, declaring "This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth from thee, he shall be thine heir."

"And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The Lord further addressed Abram more solemnly, saying, "I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it. Take therefore a heifer, a goat, and a ram of three years old, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon." These Abram took, divided them into halves, and laid them opposite each other, the birds however he did not divide. This Ceremony, called the "covenant between the pieces," was a solemn form used at that time in making a covenant or agreement, and in this instance three kinds of animals were directed as a type of such as were afterwards commanded to be used for sacrifices in the Temple. The Almighty on this occasion gave a sign of his sanction by a flame, which passed along the divided pieces.

Abram stood watching this solemn scene, and driving away the birds of prey that hovered about, when towards dusk he felt a great oppression, and a fearful darkness fell upon him; while in this trance the Almighty pronounced a solemn prophecy to him, that his successors should be slaves in a strange country during four hundred years. After which

time, they should leave that country with great riches, but that they should not arrive to inherit the land promised to him, until the fourth generation.

The Lord further encouraged Abram and assured him, that he need not be afraid of the surrounding nations, but that he should live to a good old age, and die in peace.

After Abram had resided ten years in Canaan, without having a child, his wife, Sarai, became somewhat impatient, and despairing of ever having a child herself, proposed to her husband to take Hagar as a subordinate or secondary wife, in the hope of having a child to be their heir. The Patriarch complied with the advice of his wife, and the event answered her wishes. Hagar bare a son who was named "Ishmael," signifying "God hath heard." This happened when Abram was eighty-six years of age. This evidence of God's promise much encouraged Abram's faith, and kept up the earnestness with which he always worshiped the true God. Thirteen years after this, the Almighty thought fit again to appear to Abram, renewed his assurance and gave him a new ordinance.

Approving of his righteous conduct, the Lord exhorted him to continue in it, and repeated the promise to bless him with numerous decendants, and make him the father of a great nation; as also that the whole land of Canaan should become their inheritance, and, moreover, that *He*, the *Lord*, would be their God, to protect them in the hour of trial

and tribulation. And in order that his descendants should be marked as having, on their part, entered into a covenant, He directed that as a sign of that covenant Abram should circumcise himself and all the males of his household, and that all his successors should circumcise their male children when eight days old, saying, "It shall be a token of the covenant between me and you."

On this occasion, God ordained that his name Abram should be changed into that of Abraham, thereby honoring him with the addition of one of the letters of the ineffable name of the deity.

Abraham's devotion was not to be shaken by any difficulty or painful act, serious as the operation was at his time of life, he, nevertheless, cheerfully performed it on himself and all the males of his house, he being ninety-nine years of age, and his son Ishmael thirteen. This ready and willing obedience to God's commands, brought to Abraham another manifestation of the Almighty's favor. He is again honored with the divine presence and declaration, that his wife, Sarai, should also be blessed, by having her name changed, introducing the same letter of God's holy name, already conferred on Abraham; and, further, that Sarah should have a son, from whom many nations and many kings should spring. This astonished Abraham. He fell on his face with awe and veneration, and exclaimed, "Shall I, a man of a hundred years old, beget children? and shall Sarah, an old woman of ninety years, become a

mother? Yes, replied the gracious God, Sarah, thy wife, shall bear a son and thou shalt call his name "Isaac." I will bless and multiply the seed of Ishmael, and make him a great nation, but it is with thy son Isaac whom Sarah shall bring forth, at this time in the next year, that I will fulfil my promised covenant and with his seed ever after."

In reflecting on this history, we cannot but observe how prone mankind is to error, in judging of Divine purposes, if left to the unassisted efforts of his own reason; and that without the gracious kindness of the Almighty, in revealing himself to our forefathers, we might to this day have remained ignorant of the true road to happiness. We must also remark, that mankind although sufficiently civilized to be capable of reasoning as to the knowledge of the existence of some superior power that made the Universe; and impressed as they must have been with awe at the relation and visible effects of the deluge, yet, they could not penetrate the mystery, but formed for themselves many mistaken systems of worship. The sun from its height, its warmth, and its regular motion excited the idea which made some imagine, *that* luminary to be the supreme power, which they accordingly worshiped. Some again who thought it necessary to have near them a representative of that power to which they might pray, made images for that purpose and worshiped them.

But Abraham whose mind was more exalted, and whose heart was more desirous of understanding the

attributes of the Supreme Being, boldly rejected the idolatrous worship of his forefathers, and fearlessly persevered in his own line of conduct, preaching the doctrine of the One true God.

The Almighty who knows the innermost thoughts of man, seeing the course pursued by his faithful follower, was pleased in return, to reveal himself to Abraham, and thereby instruct him in the true nature of the All-powerful and Omniscient Creator of the Universe. Abraham being so thoroughly impressed with faith and confidence in the Almighty, implicitly followed all his instructions, and put his trust in the promises thus graciously given to him. He suffered no difficulties to interfere with his duties; he went from his native place and wandered into strange countries; he fought against powerful kings in a righteous cause, to rescue the weak from the power of the oppressor. He submitted to the painful operation of circumcision at the advanced age of ninety-nine years, to fulfill the command of his God.

He patiently waited, without doubting, till it pleased God to bless him with a son, whose posterity should inherit the promised land. It was Abraham who first made known, and followed the laws of the true God, and he it was, whom the Almighty considered as a perfect man. He had implicit confidence in his God, and this confidence was accounted to him a righteous act. Whoever reads the Bible with attention, must see how highly this excellent

man was distinguished by the Almighty. It must afford every one great pleasure to read his history, for it was not merely for Abraham's sake alone, that these glorious promises were made; all succeeding generations were to be interested in them, as we find is the case at the present day even in our wanderings and dispersions throughout the world.

May we ever bear the noble example of our worthy Patriarch before our eyes! May we be firmly fixed in our faith as he was, and we may then be assured of the sanction of Heaven and the certainty of that reward which good and righteous conduct at all times ensures. Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

From the First Verse of the Eighteenth Chapter to the end of the Twenty-seventh Chapter.

My Dear Young Friends:—

The portion of the Bible to which this discourse refers, is a continuation of the history of our pious Patriarch Abraham, which contains a detail of circumstances that strongly mark his character, as well as the particular interest which the Almighty disposer of events appears to have taken with his beloved and faithful follower. It must be fresh in your recollection that in obedience to the command of God, Abraham had just undergone the ceremony of Circumcision with all the readiness and good will which evinced the great reverence he always had for the precepts of the Divine Creator of the Universe.

In the commencement of this section of the Bible we perceive the benign aspect with which on this occasion the Almighty regards his devout votary. "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre; and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day." Genesis 18: 1.

Abraham must have enjoyed an indescribable delight from such a divine manifestation, and his soul must have been highly gratified with so remarkable a sign of the Almighty's approbation of the ready compliance with his rule. No wonder then that he became more fixed in his faith, and more confident in his God. At this period we may also notice the kind and hospitable character of Abraham as shown to us by the manner in which he gave a pressing invitation to strangers, who appeared to be passing his tent as he sat enjoying the warmth of the sun. In a truly simple but earnest manner, Abraham requested them to take some refreshment at his habitation. He, according to custom, had their feet washed from the dust, and cooled by the application of fresh water. He then hastened to procure every comfort that his place afforded; attending on them in person, and in the kindest manner begged them to accept his hospitality, in order, he said, that thereby they might the better be enabled to proceed on their journey. The strangers accepted his invitation. While they sat at the table, the principal guest addressed Abraham and asked for his wife; and being answered that she was in the tent, he assumed his high character, and said, "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life, and lo! Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son." Abraham was as much astonished as rejoiced at this assurance, for he now perceived and clearly understood that this was a reward for his hospitality. Again,

this prophecy made him reflect that these apparently strange men were in reality not *mortals* but *angels*. This history should be considered as a wholesome lesson. It teaches us at all times to be kind to strangers, for we do not know what may follow. Many persons have in later days experienced the beneficial effects of kindness and hospitality to strangers who have afterwards proved to be persons of consequence, who, when least expected, have gratefully and liberally recompensed their kind and disinterested host. Thus does virtue often prove its own reward. It is in this spirit that the Royal Solomon recommends, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." Ecclesiastes 11: 1.

The Almighty, who, during the whole of this scene had vouchsafed to be present though invisible, now manifested himself, and condescended to commence a conversation with the persons present. Being pleased with the conduct of Abraham, God said to the Angels, "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" Abraham was, therefore, on this occasion honored equally with the Angels by having the command given to them in his presence as the object of their mission.

"And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not I will know.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." Genesis 18: 20–22.

This condescension of the Great Creator which was so gracious, and at the same time so indicative of the high estimation in which Abraham was held by the Almighty, encouraged that pious and truly charitable man to venture an appeal on behalf of the people of Sodom. Abraham was even allowed to plead in argument, for, says the good man: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? There may possibly be fifty good and righteous men among them." And in his earnestness and zeal in the cause, he even goes so far as to urge, that if such were the case, "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?"

Abraham's appeal in this matter was based upon the declaration made by the Almighty himself to the Angels, when he said, "And if not, I will know," signifying, I will know how to punish or pardon these wicked people. He also trusted to the known mercy of the righteous Judge of the Earth, who graciously replied, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

Abraham, thus encouraged, continued to petition if even a less number should be found. But at length

becoming conscious of his inferiority and fearful less he might be deemed presumptuous, humbly says: "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, peradventure there shall be twenty found there? And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake." Abraham urged this in the hope that if there were a less number found, mercy might yet be extended to them. But when he found that even the small number of ten good men were not to be found, he with all due humility retires from the conference. Nothing can be more descriptive of character than this dialogue. How truly kind and humane was the feeling of Abraham, and how strongly does it mark the conscious boldness of innate virtue, and the power of reasoning in the cause of humanity. Abraham built his hopes on the pious conception he had of the goodness and mercy of the Almighty, and his arguments and expressions were made with a sincere and devout veneration. The Gracious Lord of the Universe so far from considering him even officious in his appeal, shines forth in that strong light of tenderness towards poor sinful mortals wherewith he so divinely regulates the order of nature, and clearly points out to the Patriarch the necessity he is under of punishing those pertenacious, unrepenting, wicked men of Sodom and Gomorrah. At the same time evincing the care he bestows on those who are virtuous, by the directions given to the Angels, personally to proceed to save Lot and his family from among those wicked people whose punishment was as terri-

ble as it was just. Fire and brimstone fell like hail from the Heavens and utterly destroyed those cities with all their inhabitants. Thus it was that Divine vengeance was brought down in all its horrors, devouring flames darting on the city, spreading desolation in every quarter and rapidly involving the inhabitants in one general and irreparable destruction. Previously to the threatened punishment being put into execution, the Angels according to instruction from Heaven commanded Lot and his family to hasten from the city In the morning, Lot with his wife and two daughters departed to a place called Zoar, which the Almighty saved by the intercession and prayer of Lot; but his wife, for looking back on the road contrary to the divine prohibition, was turned into a pillar of salt. Lot and his two daughters arrived at Zoar, and were there placed in safety. We must here notice the expression of the sacred historian, that "the Lord remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow;" which implies, that to him Lot was indebted for his preservation. This teaches us the value of religious connections and examples when duly cultivated and improved. We have here also a proof that the forbearance of the Almighty is frequently extended towards a sinful nation on account of the Righteous who are among them. The true and faithful servants of the Lord often avert the evil from the land by their prayers and intercessions on their behalf. But we must now turn to Abraham.

In due time, according to the prophecy of the Angels and the previous promise of God, Sarah was favored with a son in the ninetieth year of her age. He was named Isaac, and was circumcised on the eighth day by his joyful father, according to the Divine command. On the day Isaac was weaned, Abraham made a splendid entertainment, thereby recognizing him as his heir. This, in all probability, excited the envy of Hagar, who had naturally considered that from the age of Abraham and Sarah, there was but little chance of their having children. The birth of Isaac destroyed the pleasing expectations she had formed of Ishmael's inheriting his father's property. It was, therefore, on this great festivity that the envy of the discontented Ishmael evinced itself, and Sarah discovered the son of her handmaid, Hagar, "mocking Isaac." This circumstance excited a new set of feelings; the presence of Hagar and her son, Ishmael, became an annoyance to Sarah. She therefore urged her husband, Abraham, to send them away. It appears, however, that the feelings of Abraham as a father did not permit him readily to agree with Sarah on this subject. Abraham was greatly concerned at this demand, and he grieved for Ishmael because he was his son. Like a pious man, however, he laid his domestic troubles before the Lord in fervent prayer, and consulted, as every one should do, the divine Counsel in this exigency. The Almighty, having designs of his own in reference to both of these extraordinary youths,

directed Abraham to comply with the wish of his wife, Sarah, stating: "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the Lad, and because of thy bondwoman, in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Genesis 21: 12.

It was Isaac whose descendants were the seed promised to Abraham, as the chosen people who were to inherit the Land. Ishmael was therefore destined to occupy some other position. This history plainly shows the many circumstances in life, which, at the time of their occurrence appears strange and unfortunate, are only part of that chain of events which regulate the affairs of this world under the guidance of the Supreme Governor of the Universe. The banishment of Hagar and her son certainly appears as the effect of Sarah's jealousy and hatred; but for our instruction the whole purpose is here explained, and the transaction laid open to us together with the motive thereof.

Poor Hagar was sent forth with only a small portion of bread and a bottle of water. Grieved, distressed, and despondent, she put her child out of her sight "under one of the trees," and overwhelmed with despair she threw herself down upon the earth, crying, "Let me not see the death of the child." The God of Abraham compassionated her case, sent his angel to comfort her, with an assurance that the lad should be the father of a great nation; and as she was famishing with thirst, he caused a well of

water to spring forth, and both she and the lad revived. Here they fixed their abode, and, under the Divine protection, Ishmael grew up to maturity, and prospered. His mother then took for him a wife from the land of Egypt. Ishmael had twelve sons, whose posterity spread themselves over the whole country called Nabathea, which extends from the Red Sea to the River Euphrates. From these are descended the Arabians and their several tribes, so celebrated for their valor and warlike achievements.

Isaac, the son of Sarah, grew up worthy of his venerable parent, by whose instructions he benefited, and in whose footsteps he diligently followed. He soon acquired the true knowledge of the Supreme God, and became as virtuous and pious as his father. Abraham thus became most affectionately attached to Isaac as his only legitimate son, the child of his old age, and the peculiar gift of God according to his divine promise.

Isaac, having arrived to the age of thirty-seven years, the Almighty thought fit to put the faith of both father and son to a most severe test. Resolved on exercising the religious feelings of his faithful servant, the Lord imposed a Command that must have astonished Abraham and terribly agitated his inmost soul: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Gen. 22.

How explicit and awful is this divine order! Thy son!—the son thou lovest! Him, upon whom thy heart is fixed!—even him to whom you look forward to become the Source of numerous descendants, even him, shalt thou sacrifice to thy God! All the feelings and sympathies of nature must have been roused! All the tenderness of a father must have been put to the rack! Astonishment, Terror, and Grief must have shaken his frame to the utmost on receiving such a Command.

But there was a fixed, a rooted principle in the bosom of our pious forefather which controlled all selfish sensations. The God whom he adored—the powerful, the eternal, the All-righteous Creator of the Universe—had issued the Command! Abraham felt it his duty to obey; confident that this Command was instigated by some wise reason which his feeble faculties could not penetrate.

Without murmuring, and with the reverence to which he was ever accustomed, he proceeded to the place appointed, together with two servants, and his son, Isaac, carrying the wood for the sacrifice. Without communicating God's injunction, or his own resolution, to his wife or household, lest they should divert him from his duty; prepared with the necessary apparatus for the sacrifice, he departed for the mountain.

Gloomy and distressing must this journey have been! Abraham's mind must have been agitated by a thousand appalling and confounding reflections; and

his son's innocent questions, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the Lamb for a burnt offering?" must have embarrassed him still more. Yet the superior energy of his mind supported him. His Confidence in God was above every other feeling; and fearful as the task was, his piety was as fervent as ever.

On their arrival at the "Mount Moriah," Abraham raises an Altar—arranges the wood—and then takes his beloved son, his dearly beloved son,—the desire and delight of his age,—and, banishing all paternal tenderness, he places him on the altar for sacrifice. Isaac now perceives that he himself is to be the devoted victim; but having been brought up in the fear of God, and stimulated by the example of his pious father, he readily suffers himself to be bound, and with submissive faith gives himself up as a sacrifice to the Lord.

But that Great and Merciful God who had observed all this devotion, and who had contemplated all this glorious struggle of feeling, would not suffer the life of his faithful servant to be sacrificed in thus following the course of his duty. The preparatory acts were all performed—the heart of his servant was ready—the hand was uplifted—and the knife was just about to be plunged into the victim: when the voice of an Angel was suddenly heard, declaring, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

What a joyful transition was this!—and how transporting must have been the feelings of both father and son at this gracious interposition of Heaven! How eagerly does Abraham unbind his dutiful child, and with what rapture do they embrace each other in this more than resurrection from the dead! The Patriarch prophecied truly, when he told his son that "God would provide the Lamb for the sacrifice;" for just behind him appeared a ram, caught in the thicket by his horns. "And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son."

This indeed was a joyful sacrifice of thanksgiving, at which the devout feelings of the worshipers were exalted to the highest stage of gratitude. Abraham and his son having performed their duty to God, descended the mountain, and returned home with hearts full of gladness, love, and faith.

Is it possible to contemplate this extraordinary and affecting narrative, without seeing to what extent a true religious feeling carried our pious forefather, Abraham? The consideration must fill us with unbounded admiration. It serves us at the present day as a powerful example, to show us that our faith and veneration towards the Great Creator of the Universe ought to be perfect. That we are not to attempt to account for that which may appear strange to our feeble reason, but that we must implicitly obey the instructions of Heaven without hesitation, at all times and under all circumstances. It but too

often occurs, that even religious persons when called upon to resign a darling object to the will of Heaven, are apt to be fretful and even rebellious against the Lord. They think their trial is peculiar, and that their lot is unjustly hard. Let such persons contemplate the burden laid upon Abraham, and the conduct of the Patriarch throughout the whole of this tragical scene. They will then become convinced that it is not the blood of the immolated victim that is pleasing to the Lord, but obedience to his voice. "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Samuel 15: 22.

The Almighty fully verified all this in the reward he promised to his faithful servant in obeying his directions in all the vicissitudes of his pilgrimage. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son;

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Genesis 22: 16–18.

DISCOURSE V.

FROM THE FIRST VERSE OF THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF GENESIS TO THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH VERSE OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

My dear young Friends:—

At the conclusion of the last discourse we left the Patriarch Abraham at Beersheba, which was situated south of the Land of Canaan. The several trials of his faith being ended, and God having blessed him with a pious and dutiful son, Abraham was desirous of settling and ending his days in the land which the Lord had promised as an inheritance to his children.

During the absence of Abraham from home with Isaac, his son, Sarah was uneasy about them. She therefore set out on her journey to Canaan to make the necessary inquiry after her husband and son. On her arrival, however, at a place called Hebron, she fell sick and died. Intelligence of the event was quickly dispatched to Abraham, who immediately hastened to the spot "to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her."

This afflicting circumstance occurring at a distance from his own home caused Abraham great difficulty.

He had no land of his own in that part of the country, wherein he could bury his wife. He was therefore anxious to provide a burying place for her in the country where he dwelt; and the manner in which he procured it, is an additional testimony of the noble disinterestedness of his mind. Having called the heads of the country together, Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto them, saying, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us my lord; thou art a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead." Genesis 23: 3–7.

Hence, it appears, that Abraham was highly respected by the chiefs of that country, though he was but a stranger and a sojourner among them. The power and wealth of the Patriarch were calculated to excite the jealousy and envy of his neighbors, but his integrity, piety, and courtesy conciliated their esteem, and produced in their minds a powerful interest in his favor. The obliging answer which he received to his petition, led the Patriarch to solicit the Cave of Machpelah in a field belonging to Ephron, one of the chiefs of that country. No sooner did he intimate his desire for that spot with a wish to purchase it, than the owner with an eager

liberality exclaimed, "Nay, my lord, hear me; the field I give thee, and the cave that is therein. I give it thee; in the presence of my people give I it thee; bury thy dead." The politeness of Ephron rises far superior to the most delicate and enlarged urbanity of modern times; nor is the independent spirit of Abraham entitled to less admiration. Though grateful to Ephron for his noble and generous offer, he would not possess a burial place among strangers, without having a fair and lasting claim to it; therefore after returning his acknowledgments to the owner, he insists upon paying him for the field. Ephron finding him immovable on this point, said: "The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that between me and thee?—bury therefore thy dead."

And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron, and Abraham weighed unto Ephron the silver which he had named, in the presence of the sons of Heth,—four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant." Genesis 23: 15.

Tradition informs us that Abraham was very anxious to purchase this spot, as it was said, that Adam and Eve were buried there. He also wished to secure it for himself and his family, because it was in the Holy Land, where *he* too was desirous of being buried. We accordingly find here a detail of the form and manner of its purchase, the public declaration thereof, and the bargain ratified in the presence of the people: "And the field, and the

cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the Sons of Heth."

This place was called "Mengorath Hamachpelah," and was a capacious hollow or cave in the earth. It was the custom in those days, and which continued some time after, to bury the dead in hollow caves under ground—very different from the present mode of digging graves and filling them up again with the earth taken therefrom. In those days, the dead were placed in a cavern which was occasionally visited by the friends of the deceased.

In this manner, we find, that the Egyptians deposited the bodies of their relations and friends; and being willing to preserve them for such visitations, they embalmed them to prevent disintegration or putrefaction, by which means the bodies remained for ages without much alteration.

An evidence of this practice may be seen even at this day in the mummies brought from Egypt of persons who were buried probably more than two thousand years. The same mode was adopted by Joseph with the corpse of his father, Jacob. We find also that the body of Joseph was preserved for many years after his death, so that it could be carried out of Egypt when the Israelites left that country, nearly two hundred years after his demise.

Two things here present themselves to our notice:

1st. That this is the first instance related in the Bible of the necessity, as well as the duty incumbent

on us, to bury the dead—to withdraw from our presence the sad change which the mortal part of the human frame undergoes from decomposition—and to deposit the body in that Earth whence part of its composition is derived. Burying the dead is also necessary to prevent the ill-effects which would be produced on the living by the effluvia accompanying the decomposition of animal bodies, tainting the atmosphere with their destructive qualities. The soul that animated the body during life, being now departed, returns to Heaven to its Maker, there to receive such punishment or reward as its conduct through life may have merited. The shocking and lamentable change which the body undergoes after death, necessitates its removal from the human eye, so that the respect which was entertained for the deceased while living, may not be lessened, through the horrid appearance of the body after the flight of the soul.

2d. The solemn form of burial—the serious act of putting away from us forever, the body of a person with whom we have with comfort or pleasure passed our lives, or one whose actions we have regarded with respect and even admiration—must tend to produce a powerful effect on the minds of the survivors. They feel the deprivation with great sorrow and grief, and the reflection is at all times concomitant, that sooner or later, they will each and every one of them become a like inanimate mass and be deposited in the Earth a prey to the worm, lost and forgotten.

Such a reflection cannot fail to impress upon us the necessity of performing good and useful acts during life, in order that we may not be forgotten by our friends when we shall be no more. It should also be strongly impressed on our consideration that the allotment of life, and the disposition of events, are in the hands of a Supreme Power—the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth.

We should at all times be sensible of our own mortality—and have a confident and lively hope of that solemn time when corruption shall no longer exist, and when the grave shall yield up, at the command of Omnipotence, its sleeping inhabitants. Hence, following the dead to the grave and performing the last religious rites, were instituted by our Sages of blessed memory, as important duties not only out of respect to the departed, but as an especial lesson to the living; and for this purpose it is, that one of the most expressive and emphatic prayers ever composed, is directed to be read at our funeral service. No Ritual was ever composed more solemn more true, or more soul-stirring than that, handed down to us, from time immemorial; and none appeals more strongly to the heart, or is better calculated to awaken in man those feelings which should predominate on such solemn occasions.

It is to be regretted that men now-a-days attend a funeral more from custom and habit, than from a pious and religious feeling—and when the Rich die, their remains are attended to the grave by their

friends and acquaintances merely from the esteem he was held in, because of his wealth. It were to be wished that more seriousness should be attached to this ceremony—that the people would call all the surrounding circumstances to mind, and take a lesson from them; that such is the end of all men; that the *rich* and the *poor*, the *strong* and the *weak*, before the Lord of all the Earth, are equal—provided they are good and virtuous.

On the reading of the funeral service we should reflect on the short tenure of life, and resolve to employ our time in a manner acceptable to our Father in Heaven. The child should also reflect upon the object and purpose of reciting the Kadish during the eleven months succeeding the demise of a Parent. This *Kadish*, generally speaking, is a timely and ejaculatory praise and glorification of Almighty God—showing that the child, though grieved at the death of a parent, does not at the same time murmur against the decrees of Providence, and the natural consequences of mortality. In truth, it should be to us a solemn lesson that we are but humble, perishing beings. We should at all times strongly bear in mind our own unworthiness, and by our good conduct aim at deserving happiness in *this*, as well as eternal blessing in a *future* world.

We should also pray that our conduct through life may prove such as to deserve a longer duration to our name and reputation than that which is allowed to our mortal frame, which must sooner or later

become a prey to the worm, and be thereby lost to the world at large. "For our days are like a shadow that passeth, like a cloud that is vanished, and like the dust that flieth."

Let us now return to the remaining portion of this section. We felt ourselves called upon to make the digression, in order to explain to our young friends the origin of the custom of Burying the dead as deduced from Bible History, as well as the order of service performed at our funerals up to the present day. We shall continue this mode of explaining all matters which may present themselves in the course of our labors for the information of our readers in general.

The Patriarch Abraham being now left a widower, and advanced in years, began to think how he should dispose of his son, Isaac, and provide for his future prospects in life. He was anxious to keep Isaac true to the Religion he had taught him. He was quite satisfied with his passive faith and obedience as exhibited by his readiness to be bound on the Altar as a sacrifice to his God. It became now a matter of serious consideration with Abraham how and where to select a wife suitable for him. Experience had sufficiently taught him how much men's happiness, feelings, and opinions are influenced by their wives. He was, therefore, extremely anxious that his son should not mix with the surrounding nations and thus run the risk of having his pure faith contaminated by the sentiments and example of a pagan

woman and her relations. He therefore commissioned his trusty servant Eliezer, and bound him by an oath to go and seek a proper and suitable wife for his son, with the following instructions: "And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of Heaven, and the God of the Earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." Genesis 24: 3–4.

He gave Eliezer a further charge, that if the woman should not be willing to come to his country, Isaac should by no means go to hers, and settle among strangers, for that would prove destructive of all his plans, as he expressly tells his servant: "And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again."

Eliezer set out on his mission, very well provided with camels and valuable property. He traveled to Mesopotamia, the city where Nahor, Abraham's brother dwelt. On coming near the Town he halted his camels near a well, prayed to God for success in his present undertaking, and determined on the following mode of conduct. It being the custom for the young women to come out of the Town to draw water from the well, Eliezer said to himself, I will wait here, and the first young woman that I shall ask for water, who shall readily give me to drink, and offer to water my camels, I shall consider the one allotted for my master's son, Isaac.

Eliezer here proved himself a fit and proper person for the business he had undertaken. He well knew that the great happiness in the married state depends on the kindness and industry of the Woman, and that an experiment like this, would show him the temper and disposition of the maiden.

He had scarcely concluded, before Rebekah came out of the Town with a pitcher on her shoulder to draw water, which having filled, she was about to go away. Eliezer observing her to be very beautiful and extremely modest, ran towards her and requested a drink of water. She with great good nature immediately lowered the pitcher on her hand and held it for him to drink ; and when he had done drinking, she said: "I will draw some also for your camels" —all this was done so readily and with such good nature, that Eliezer stood silently admiring her, and secretly hoping that she might prove to be of a family answering his commission. He then presented her with a golden nostril Ring, and two bracelets of great value. He then said to her, "Pray, whose daughter are you?—Can I have a place in your father's house to lodge?" To which she replied: "I am the Grand-daughter of Nahor. We have plenty of fodder for your cattle and Room for yourself."

"Blessed be thou, O God," cried Eliezer, "Thou hast not ceased thy Grace from my master, that thou hast guided me to the house of my master's brother."

Rebekah then ran home and told her mother all that had happened. Her brother, whose name was

Laban, seeing the golden ornaments on his sister's hand, went out to Eliezer and invited him to his House, gave shelter and food for his cattle, and made him heartily welcome. Eliezer, however, full of the business he came about, and thankful to God for his success hitherto, makes his proposal immediately—and after telling who he is, and the history of his mission, he asks to take Rebekah home with him for a wife for his master's son, Isaac. The father and brother of the damsel make no objection, and after asking Rebekah's consent, and getting her slaves and other things ready, they give her their blessing, and she sets out on the journey.

One evening, near the latter part of the journey, they observed a man coming towards them, who, Eliezer said, was his master; upon which Rebekah slipped off the camel, and put on her veil according to the custom of the country. When Isaac saw her beauty and her modest behavior, and heard the account of her kindness and good nature, he took her home to the tent of his late mother, married her, and loved her ever after.

Having thus succeeded in uniting Isaac according to his wish, Abraham himself took a second wife, whose name was Keturah, by whom he had several children, who became the heads of popular tribes. Finding at length that the infirmities of age were gaining fast upon him, and that his dissolution could not be far off, he settled his worldly affairs, giving a portion to each of his other sons, and leaving the

principal estate to Isaac as heir of the promise made to him by the Almighty on a former occasion. Having thus provided, as every man should do, for the future comfort of his family, Abraham no doubt, prepared for his great change in a manner becoming his pious character. That solemn event at last arrived, and Abraham departed this life—an old man and full of years—at the age of one hundred and seventy-five. The remains of the venerable Patriarch were with the greatest solemnity deposited by the side of his beloved Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah, by his sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

This picture is both touching and instructive. Death, the great dissolver of all human relations, ought at least to be the means of reconciling those who remain behind. Why should brothers be disunited and envious of each other, when the time is hastening on, when the one will be consigned to the silent grave, and the surviving party will feel, if not wholly lost to humanity, a sense of regret that any unbrotherly feeling should have arisen in his breast. Isaac and Ishmael, though once discordant, unite in sympathetic sorrow over the grave of their father, Abraham, and become friendly disposed towards each other. Let the lesson they teach, be carefully improved by all who bear the fraternal character, and induce them to go and do likewise.

The balance of this portion goes on to detail the family record of Ishmael, who formed twelve chiefs of wandering tribes according to the promise of the

Lord to Abraham: "And also of the son of the Bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed."

This relation concerning the children of Keturah, and many others of the same class throughout the Bible, are merely to notice the fact of their existence; but the subsequent history is only carried out through one branch of a family. In the same manner we see the history of Adam was only continued through the family of Seth till Noah, of whose descendants the principal account carried on, is that of *Shem*. Thus, the history of the Patriarchs commenced with Abraham and is continued to Isaac, and Ishmael is only mentioned at this part of the history. We shall find the same system followed with Esau, of whom we hear little more after the first account. As the history proceeds, it confines itself to Jacob and his descendants, called the "Children of Israel" and whose descendants are the Israelites of the present day.

The history of Abraham has shown us the great virtue of a true sense of Religion and a proper veneration towards the great Creator of the Universe. It teaches us to be pious and faithful, to put our trust in God and fear no evil, and to stop at no difficulty which may appear to prevent our acting rightly. We must depend in full confidence on that mighty power, who is, as the Psalmist declares, "good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works." The character of Abraham is best seen by the actions

recorded of him, and how brilliant does it appear! An unshaken confidence in God, who called him out of his native land, and distinguished him throughout his state of Pilgrimage. We shall see, as we proceed in the reading of the Sacred Volume, the same sentiments, and the same actions followed up by his children Isaac and Jacob; and may we who are the descendants of the Children of Israel follow in their footsteps.

May we also act as they did, and thus find favor and grace in the sight of the Lord, and may our conduct be ever approved by Him. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI.

FROM THE NINETEENTH VERSE OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER TO THE END OF THE NINTH VERSE OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER.

My dear young Friends:—

This section of the Bible proceeds with the history of the Patriarchs. Having in the last discourse detailed that of Abraham and merely mentioned the names of the descendants of Ishmael, the section we shall now consider, confines itself solely to the relation of what occurred to Isaac.

Rebekah, like her mother-in-law, proved barren. Hence, Isaac, like his father Abraham, became unhappy, and prayed to God to relieve his distress. His petition was granted, and Rebekah was favored with two sons. The first born was of a red or copper-colored complexion, and covered all over with hair, and on that account was named Esau. The second-born was named Jacob. These boys grew up to manhood. Esau became a mighty Huntsman, and was constantly in the field; while Jacob, whose disposition was more steady, and piously inclined, remained at home engaged in study, and tending his

father's sheep. Esau, who constantly brought home game from the field, became the father's favorite; but Jacob who was more quiet and domestic, was the favorite of the mother.

One day when Jacob had just prepared some lintel pottage, Esau came in from the chase, fatigued and hungry, and demanded eagerly of Jacob some of this pottage, and in a very abrupt manner called out to Jacob: "Give me to eat of this red pottage." Jacob had cooked this pottage for the family; and being in the habit of seeing Esau bring home game (which at this time it is likely he had not done), said to him, "If you will sell me your birthright, you shall have some of my pottage." Esau cries out, "I am dying with hunger, what care I for a birthright?" Upon which, he immediately, with an oath, sold his birthright to Jacob, who gave him in return, some Bread and some pottage of lentiles; "And he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way—thus Esau despised the Birthright."

We must here remark that the circumstance just alluded to, appears at first sight almost too trifling to be worthy a place in the Bible; but upon due reflection we shall become convinced that there is no part of the history related by the sacred writer that has not some serious meaning, or that does not teach us some important and useful lesson. Short as this tale is, it strongly developes the characters and dispositions of the two brothers.

Esau, a man who lived at large, constantly in

the field, hunting game for food, or wild beasts for destruction, had the manners and sentiments of rude and uncivilized people. His wants were confined to those of food and clothing. Continually exposed to the weather and to the danger of being destroyed by the ferocious animals he chased, he never gave himself any thought about his moral state, or even about a God. He was a wild, inconsiderate, being. When he came in, pressed with hunger, he impatiently cried out, "put some of this red pottage into my mouth, for I am fatigued and hungry." And when Jacob attempted to bargain with him for the Birthright, he makes no conditions. The Birthright does not appear to him worth caviling about, but he readily gives it up, saying, "Of what consequence is the Birthright to me?—I am a hunter, and every hour likely to be killed in the chase; I care nothing for this Birthright, only give me some of this nice red pottage." Hence, as is afterwards very properly remarked, having eaten his fill, he was satisfied—and consequently "Esau despised his Birthright."

So inconsiderate was Esau, and so rough his disposition, that he gave himself neither thought nor trouble respecting the nature of this birthright, for having no thought for the future, he only sought his present gratification.

Jacob, however, who was "a plain man, dwelling in tents," had more reflection. He knew and considered well the words of God to his grandfather Abraham: "I will establish my covenant between

me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Genesis 17: 7. Jacob knew and felt assured that the descendants of his father would be the persons who were not only to inherit the land of Canaan, but who were allotted to be God's chosen and peculiar people. Jacob was also well aware, and had too much judgment, not to know the value of such an inheritance. He was too pious not earnestly to wish it might fall to his lot, though doubtful that the promise would be fulfilled in him. He had observed that although his grandfather Abraham had Ishmael by Hagar, and many other children by Keturah, yet that his father Isaac alone was to be the heir was clear,—as it was specifically promised by the Almighty that succession should be through the son of Sarah: "For in Isaac shall thy seed be called," and therefore Isaac was decidedly pointed out by God as the intended person whose family was to be so highly distinguished; but no such marked distinction had taken place in his case. Jacob could not tell which of the two sons of his father would be considered as the heir to this blessing. They were twins, and therefore appeared to be equally entitled; yet from the previous example it was to be presumed, that but one of them was intended to be the person. Esau had probably the better claim, as he was the first born of the two. Jacob was moreover well aware that neither the manners nor the disposition of Esau were at all of

the serious character requisite for religious and pious conduct, and he being willing to insure something like a right to himself, took this opportunity of offering to purchase the birthright from his brother, and in which transaction he found no difficulty. Esau estimated it of little or no value, and was quite careless and indifferent about it. This portion of Biblical history carries likewise with it a curious specimen of the mode in which Providence arranges the affairs of mankind. In all circumstances regarding himself, Man is allowed a *free will*, but the ultimate progress of things is the ordination of Divine superintendence, as the wise men of old have declared it as their belief, that "All things are ordained by Providence, excepting those relating to the duties of man towards his God;" and hence the manner in which affairs are to be brought about is often left to the good or evil actions of men, which, however different, at least in one way or the other always tend to produce the effects originally fixed by fate. In this instance, it is evident from the subsequent events, that Jacob was the branch through which the knowledge of God and his worship was destined to be communicated, but the means by which this was to be consummated, was evidently to appear as the result of human actions. Esau was born with propensities highly useful to man's physical necessities, that is, for the procurance of food and raiment, and for the removal from the habitable part of the Globe of ferocious animals. Jacob, again, had faculties of a more meek and stu-

dious nature, such as are best calculated to lead men to their moral good, and insure their happiness by a civil and religious mode of life. Jacob had therefore acquired a high sense of right and wrong. He was sensible that his brother, being the elder, had a greater right to the envied inheritance; but his reflection and good sense led him to perceive that Esau had not the qualifications requisite to promote the good intended to be thereby effected. He therefore employed such a method as might entitle him to assume this acknowledged right from his Brother by purchase, and he finds this very easy from those very circumstances which rendered Esau incompetent for the furtherance of the object designed by Providence.

This reflection will also lead us to account for another act of Jacob's, to which indeed he was instigated by the tenderness and affection of his mother, of which, we shall speak hereafter in its proper place.

A dreadful famine was raging at this time in Canaan; Isaac was compelled to go in quest of food to a distant country. It seems to have been his first intention to go down into Egypt, where his father had sought an asylum in a similar case of distress. Then the Almighty appeared unto him, and warned him from taking such a step, adding this promise in case of his obedience: "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these Countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto

Abraham thy father. And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the Earth be blessed." Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." Genesis 26: 3, etc.

Isaac obeyed the voice of God and dwelt in Gerar, the capital of the Philistines. The favor of God made Isaac eminently prosperous in Philistia, and he waxed so great in the possession of flocks and herds, that the Philistines envied him. During his sojourn there, Abraham had dug many wells, to which Isaac laid a just claim. These wells the envious Philistines stopped up, and filled with earth, thus destroying the property of another, without enriching themselves. Abimelech, the King of that Country, perceiving the animosity which his people had against Isaac, and being somewhat jealous himself of the Patriarch's greatness, desired him to withdraw from the Country. "Go from us, for thou art mightier than we." Isaac accordingly left the place, and settled in the Valley, where he dug again for the wells of his father; but the envious Philistines followed him from the City with their malice, and seized the property which had descended to him as an hereditary right. The Patriarch, wearied out with their malignity, and not willing to resent the injury he had received, removed still further, and fixed his residence at Beersheba, where he built an altar for worship, "and called upon the name of the Lord."

After Isaac had been some time comfortably settled in Beersheba, Abimelech, who had so ungenerously dismissed him from Gerah, paid him a visit, attended by the principal officers of his household. Isaac, surprised, and perhaps apprehensive that some evil design prompted this visit, thus addressed them: "Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?" The interrogatory was sharp, but nevertheless just. The Philistine chiefs replied, that having seen him eminently the favorite of Heaven, they came merely out of esteem and regard towards him, and to enter into a covenant of peace with him.

Peace-loving Isaac readily consented to the proposal; and having entertained his guests in his usual hospitable manner, "they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another, and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace." Thus the Lord softened the asperity of his enemies, and infused a fear into their minds. So superior is innate goodness, that even the ungodly have some sense of reverence for it, and are some times desirous to be on good terms with the righteous. Such was the case with the Patriarch Isaac, who was so much respected and esteemed for his virtues, that he was called "*The blessed of the Lord.*" During a number of years after this event, Isaac dwelt in peace and happiness with his family. Our Patriarch as he advanced in years became nearly blind, so that he could not distinguish one person from another.

Finding himself, therefore, bowed down with the infirmities of old age, and likely soon to end his pilgrimage, he called for Esau who was his favorite son, and gave him a charge to procure some of his dainty venison and to dress it as he was wont to do, promising afterwards to confer upon him his paternal blessing.

The blessing of a father in those days was highly prized by the children, particularly the blessing of such a father as Isaac, who had been deemed of so pure a character as fit to be offered up as a sacrifice to God.

Rebekah, who had overheard the conversation between Isaac and Esau, was fearful of this blessing being given to Esau, whereby her favorite son Jacob would be deprived of that, which she considered so desirable for him to obtain. This made her feel very uneasy; but recollecting the prophecy she heard before the children were born, "And the elder shall serve the younger," she comforted herself for the moment, and thought it nought but right to attempt procuring this blessing by a stratagem. Full of this idea, she called her son Jacob and commanded him to fetch a couple of kids. These she cooked in the way Isaac liked best. She then told Jacob to take them to his father, that he might enjoy himself, and that in the fullness of his heart, he would be inspired to bestow on him the prophetic blessing. Jacob, however, who did not like anything that had the appearance of deceit, objected to the scheme, and said

to his mother, "My skin is smooth, whereas that of my Brother is rough and coarse; my father, although blind, will by the feel discover the deception, and I shall bring down a curse instead of a blessing. His mother, however, strongly insisted on his going; and replied to Jacob's objection in the following manner: "Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them."

Rebekah was too much impressed with the importance of this Blessing not to risk something to procure it; besides, she felt certain that Isaac would not refuse it, even if he did discover the deception practised upon him. She accordingly dressed the kids, and made Jacob put on Esau's clothes, and bring the venison to his father.

Jacob did as his mother desired him. Isaac eat of the food, and having drank some wine, he called his son to him, embraced him and blessed him, saying, "Therefore, God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee." No sooner had Isaac finished the blessing, than Esau came home from the chase, when Isaac discovered the trick that had been played upon him. He however felt that the blessing he had uttered was prophetic, and therefore could not be recalled. He was sensible that the whole was of divine appointment, and he therefore confirmed the promise in this strong manner, by de-

claring, "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed." Esau, who was much grieved on the occasion, burst forth into tears, and in language which one would imagine proceeded from a most tender spirit exclaimed, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"

Isaac, who was desirous to bestow all he could upon his first-born, without violating the direction of Providence, "answered, and said unto him, behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of Heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." Genesis 27: 39, 40.

This prophecy was exactly fulfilled; for in the time of David, the Edomites, who were the lineal descendants of Esau, fell under the Israelitish yoke; but in the days of Jehoram, king of Judah, they shook it off and regained their independence.

This transaction so exasperated Esau against his brother, that he formed the design of killing him; but, as if he had some regard for the peace of his father, he resolved to postpone his malicious intent till "the days of mourning for him should be ended."

Rebekah, who had learned of the evil purpose of Esau, with all the lively feeling of a tender mother, advised Jacob to take shelter with her brother Laban until Esau's anger should have passed off. She accordingly arranged with her husband to send Jacob

to Padan-Aram, and take to wife one of the daughters of Laban. Accordingly Isaac called Jacob, and communicated to him his wish, and at the same time told him to beware of marrying any of the heathen Canaanitish women, but to go to Laban, and obtain one of his daughters to wife. Isaac then dismissed Jacob, confirming the benediction which he had before pronounced upon him. "And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people, and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham." Jacob, in obedience to the wishes of his parents, set out on his journey to go to Laban, his uncle, who lived at Padan-Aram. The account of his journey, and his arrival at his uncle's house, we shall recount in a future discourse, which will be found very instructive and extremely interesting. Esau, provoked still more at this escape of Jacob, as well as the conduct of his father towards him, plunged deeper into immorality and profaneness, taking, as it should seem out of mere spite to Isaac, one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife. This act of Esau was still more aggravating, and shows how unfit he was for the prophetic blessing, having previously, without consulting his parents, taken two wives from among the Canaanites, which occasioned "a grief of mind," or, as it is termed in the Sacred Volume, "bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah." Reflecting on this portion of Bible His-

tory, we are led to remark, that the motives by which Isaac was actuated in favor of Esau, were, his fond attachment to him, ignorant as he was of his son's rude habits and unfitness to be the heir to the promised future. Isaac being blind, was led away by the specious acts of Esau, in having his palate pleased with the peculiar savoriness of his venison, and on that account overlooked his departure from the pure principles of Religion and Virtue. His marriage into improper families was for the moment forgotten, and the doating father resolved to give his blessing, not where Providence designed, but where his own affection and indiscreet partiality inclined him. From this we may see, how seldom can the fond expectations of a parent for an unworthy child, be realized. But the designs and passions of men are overruled by the providence of God, to bring to pass his own wise and gracious purposes. It was his will that the promise should run in the line of Jacob, and to accomplish this, he makes use even of the weakness of Isaac and the fond ambition of Rebekah. Rebekah, in the transaction, had prompted Jacob to play a trick upon his father, to procure the blessing intended for Esau; and Jacob, though conscious of the impropriety of deceit, yet yielded to his mother's entreaties. Rebekah's motives sprung from a strong impression she had conceived, that Jacob was the son elect who should through his posterity, spread the holy knowledge of Virtue and the Worship of the true God. Of this she was convinced from what the Angel had told her

when she went to inquire of the Lord at the time she was about to give birth to the children, Esau and Jacob.

So strangely is the lot of mankind cast in this world, that sometimes a little wrong, executed with a virtuous intention, may be justified as right. In the history before us, we plainly see how the feelings and actions of men produce effects of which they had not the least idea or intention. Man having his Will free, can act as he pleases. He ought, therefore, always endeavor to be on the right side, and act according to the dictates of Virtue. The effects of which, being left to the dispensation of Providence, will always prove right in due time, for the consequences of the designs and passions of men are even allowed by the Creator to bring to pass his own wise and gracious purposes.

Thus far we have the history of our forefather Isaac, who was a faithful and pious servant of the Lord. Many circumstances in his life were similar to those which had occurred to his father Abraham. Both took wives of their own relations. Both married at the age of forty years. The wives of both were barren at the early period of their married life. Abraham's eldest son, Ishmael, and Isaac's eldest son, Esau, were expert and famous hunters. Their second sons were pious, good, and steady men. A famine drove both from their settled places of abode. Both experienced trouble from the kings of the countries wherein they sojourned, and both overcame those

difficulties through divine interposition. Both were earnest and pious, and the result proved, that they became the recipients of God's unlimited blessings.

May we, their descendants, look up to, and follow their excellent examples, that we thereby may become equally virtuous and pious, and thus deserve the favor of heaven in all our undertakings through life. Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.

From the Tenth Verse of the Twenty-Eighth Chapter to the end of the Second Verse of the Thirty-Second Chapter.

My Dear Young Friends:—

This portion of the Bible introduces the history of Jacob, our forefather, who is the third of the Patriarchs. It contains many important subjects for our consideration. We must bear in mind that Jacob was rather suddenly sent away from his father's house, and we are not informed that any very great preparation was made for his departure, nor that any persons were sent with him as guides. On the contrary, the order of his Mother was, "Make your escape from the anger of your brother, and take shelter with your Uncle Laban." We must therefore naturally conclude, Jacob to have been very solitary and uncomfortable during so toilsome a journey across an uninhabited country, and most probably, under very unpleasant reflections on account of the unbrotherly manner in which he had procured his father's blessing. There can be no doubt but that he suffered much hardship during his journey, which may probably be considered as a species of punish-

ment for his incorrect conduct in that instance. But though the Almighty disposer of events may have thought fit to make him feel its impropriety in this respect, yet, Jacob being destined to be the person through whose line the promise to Abraham should be fulfilled, it was necessary that he should be fully impressed with the faith requisite to fix his sentiments and guide his conduct. Jacob, however, was not suffered to remain long in suspense, nor without comfort.

We turn our eyes now to the solitary Wanderer, traveling on foot, in a trackless Desert, towards Haran. His going without attendants, is easily to be accounted for, by the fearful concern of his mother, lest he should be pursued by Esau.

The shades of night began to close upon the Traveler, and no place of rest appeared in view. There was not even a friendly Cave at hand, beneath whose covert he could take shelter during the hours of darkness and danger. But the "Shepherd of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." He keeps his faithful servants in the night, as well as in the day, beneath the shadow of his Wing.

Jacob being fatigued, looked around him for some place to rest himself till the morning. Alas! there was none to meet his eye; the forlorn Wanderer was fain to take a stone for a pillow whereon to rest his weary head, and having full confidence in his Maker, he, unawed by fear of Wild Beasts, or other evils, soon closed his eyes in sleep. While he lay in this

place, his mental eye was favored with a vision the most remarkable on record. He dreamed that he beheld a Ladder standing on the Earth, the top of which reached to Heaven; that Angels appeared to be going up and down the Ladder; and that, at the top of all, appeared the Divine Majesty, or visible symbol of God's presence in a manner most awful and indescribable, and a Voice was heard to declare—

"I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the Earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the West, and to the East, and to the North, and to the South; and in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the Earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that, of which I have spoken to thee." Genesis 28: 14, 15.

When Jacob awoke, the awful impression of this Vision remained strong in his mind. He had received a manifestation of the Divine presence, and he felt a holy dread at the idea, that this was the peculiar place where the Majesty of Heaven held communion with Mankind on Earth. Though the Visitation was full of love and promise, yet there was something in it so awful and tremendous, that it made Jacob exclaim:

"How dreadful is this place! This is none other

but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." Genesis 28: 17.

This revelation was not only a powerful encouragement to Jacob's faith, but was also a kind of moral lesson to Mankind in general.

The Ladder appeared to him to imply that Man, although stationed on Earth, may nevertheless, by regular and virtuous steps gradually become exalted, till he arrives at the glorious Heaven; that the Angels ascending and descending, indicated that his Actions may either raise or lower him, accordingly.

One of our learned Commentators, has given us the following ingenious explanation of this glorious Vision:

"The Ladder represents Divine Providence, which governs all things, and particularly then, directed Jacob on his journey, every step of the same, being under Divine direction. Its being placed upon the Earth signified the steadfastness of Providence, which cannot in any way be shaken. The top of it reaching to Heaven shows us that it extends itself throughout the World, to everything great or small, high or low. The several steps in the Ladder signifying the various motions of the Divine power and wisdom. The Angels going up and down are the great ministers of God's Providence by whom he manages all things here below, and who are never idle, but always in motion to succor and assist the true servants of God. Their ascending, shows their going to receive the Divine orders and commands; and their

descending, their execution of the said instructions. And with respect to Jacob's present condition, the former signified their safe conduct of him on his journey to Padan-Aram, and the other, bringing him home again. Above all, appeared the Almighty, as the immovable director of all events, from whom, as the First Cause, all things proceed, and to whom all things at last return."

This awful annunciation of God to Jacob made a strong impression on his mind, comforted his anxiety, and fixed his heart on religion and virtue. Jacob then, in a fervid spirit of devotion, took the stone which he had used for his pillow, raised it as an Altar, and poured Oil on it, to anoint it to the service of the Most High. The place where this occurred was called "Luz." Jacob named it "*Beth-el*," which signifies the house of God, and which it afterwards proved to be, since it was the very spot on which the Temple was built by King Solomon.

Jacob was in reality a truly pious man. He had spent a considerable time in religious study in the schools of Shem and Eber (famous in those days), and in which he was taught the knowledge of the true God.

The next religious act which Jacob performed at this consecrated place was a solemn vow for himself and his household to serve God faithfully, if he should return to his father in peace and safety.

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and

will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; and the Eternal will be to me a God: Then this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Genesis 28: 21, 22.

Jacob now proceeded on his journey with a gladdened heart toward Mesopotamia, and coming near a place called Haran, he fell in with several flocks of sheep and their shepherds, who were waiting round a well until a sufficient number should have assembled to remove a heavy stone with which it was covered, so that they might water their cattle. Jacob inquired of them concerning his uncle, Laban. "And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well; And behold Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep." While he was thus conversing with the shepherds, his cousin drew near to the well with her flocks. As soon as Jacob saw her, and was told who she was, he instantly, with a natural politeness and affection, rolled away the stone which closed the well by his own power and without any assistance, gave water to her sheep, and introduced himself as her cousin. Here we must remark, how beautifully picturesque is this incident. The female characters in the early part of scripture history are all introduced to our notice in a modest, becoming, and domestic employment. Sarah, at the entertainment of the Angels, made cakes with her own hands, and baked them upon the hearth. Rebekah was first seen by

Eliezer, in the act of drawing water for her father's household; and here Rachel first appears, tending her father's sheep.

What an instructive lesson do these instances afford to the fair sex, not to be above those employments which are eminently adapted to render them "helps meet for their husbands."

Jacob instantly fell in love with Rachel, and no doubt his attention to her in removing the enormous stone from the well, and giving water to her sheep, excited her admiration, so that when he made her acquainted that he was her cousin, she, full of eager joy and gladness, ran home to inform her father, while Jacob remained in charge of the flock. Laban, on hearing that his sister's son had arrived, ran forth to meet him, and welcomed him to his house. Jacob informed his uncle of all that had passed in his father's family, and of the reason of his coming to Padan-Aram, at the same time offering to abide there as his servant. Laban readily accepted this tender of Jacob's service, but insisted on paying him wages, saying, "because thou art my brother, shouldest thou, therefore, serve me for nought?" That love which had taken possession of the heart of Jacob towards Rachel, prompted him to make an offer of serving Laban for her seven years. Rachel had an elder sister named Leah, of whom we shall speak presently. Laban, glad of so good a bargain, readily agreed to it, and Jacob served the seven years with much pleasure, in the hope of obtaining his dearly beloved

Rachel. At the end of the seven years, the Wedding was celebrated, and Laban made a great feast in honor of the nuptials. In the evening Laban took his daughter Leah and placed her in the place of Rachel. Jacob, on discovering this, felt much hurt at this trick played upon him by his uncle, who, upon being remonstrated with, endeavored to make the best excuse he could for this cheat, saying, "it was contrary to the custom of the country to marry the younger before the first-born."

Laban well knowing that love would make large sacrifices to attain its object, offered to give Jacob Rachel also at the end of the Week, on condition of his serving him another seven years. Jacob, who was too much in love with Rachel to refuse, consented, and served Laban seven years more for her, whom he loved more than Leah.

Here we must observe, that in those days it was the custom of that country to marry more than one wife, so that at the time of this history the marrying of two or more wives was not considered as unlawful.

At the end of the second seven years, Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter; and his time of servitude being ended, he was anxious to return to his native place; but Laban was not so willing to part with him. He was satisfied that his affairs had prospered very much since Jacob had the care of them. He could not help acknowledging the fact, when he said, "I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry, for I have learned by experience that

the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake. Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it." Jacob, however, argues the necessity of going home, for he very justly says, "And now when shall I provide for mine own house also?"

After much solicitation on the part of Laban, Jacob consented to remain, on condition of receiving as his hire all such of the flock as should be produced in future, having a "speckled, streaked, or dark red appearance."

In order that this should be fairly done, all the sheep so marked that were at that time among the flock, were to be removed, and none but white sheep allowed to remain. This proposition pleased Laban mightily, as he did not imagine that his stock would suffer much diminution from the casual or accidental birth of a streaked or spotted sheep or goat. He accordingly separated all those that were in any way so marked, and gave them in charge of his sons at a place three days' journey from home. Jacob then undertook the care of the rest, which were all white, and belonged to Laban. Jacob was, however, now placed in a different situation from that in which he had hitherto been. He had stated the necessity he was under of providing for his family. Laban, however, being reluctant to part with so fortunate and attentive a servant, allows him to make his own terms, and those Jacob chose, were of a nature which probably would prove beneficial to himself, if it pleased Providence to favor his exertions. Jacob was a man

of deep reflection; he had made observations and understood the nature of things. He made use of this science to forward what would prove most advantageous to himself. Jacob "took rods of green poplar, and of the hazel, and chestnut tree, and peeled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods." These he set in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink. The effect of this act was most striking; and the result was that a great number of the flocks proved striped and speckled. These, according to agreement, became Jacob's property, and he put them aside, so that in a short time he became possessed of a very large flock. In this action Jacob depended much on the favor of Providence; the experiment, he was justified to make, but its success he could not insure. He attempted to benefit himself by his science, but without the least criminal intention of injuring his employer. It was a mere matter of chance. More white, or even dusky brown animals must naturally have been expected from a white or even a colored stock than spotted or streaked. Nay, the whole experiment might have failed; and if he succeeded, it was evident that it was the will of a supreme power in whom Jacob had the greatest confidence, and the most firm reliance on the promise so prophetically delivered to him in the dream at Bethel. And in fact it so turned out that the Almighty, whose purpose it was to forward Jacob's progress in life, did actually favor his exertions, and thus increased his

store. Laban, however, began to be jealous of Jacob's success. He was no longer so friendly with him as before. This roused the attention of Jacob and made him remark to his wives, "Your father looks strangely at me because God has blessed me. You know how truly and how long, I have served him without fee or reward, yet he has played me a great many tricks. Now the Angel of the Lord has said unto me, Go home to the land of your nativity. I shall therefore quit this place." His wives agreed that he was right, and the whole family set off with all their goods to return to Padan-Aram, to the house of their father, Isaac. When Laban heard of Jacob's departure, he followed him, most likely with no good intention; but an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream at night, and warned him not to meddle with Jacob, so that when he reached Jacob he changed his tone, and instead of upbraiding him as he intended, he merely said, "Why did you steal away and carry off my daughters in this manner? If you had apprized me thereof, you should have been sent away with pleasure and honors. You have used me ill, and I am much disposed to do you harm, but your God has warned me not to meddle with you, so go to your father's house in peace; but stop, says Laban, why did you steal my gods?" Jacob then replied as follows: "With regard to my going secretly, I was afraid you would steal your daughters from me, and as to your gods, I know nothing of them, examine all my property, and see if you can find them." The

fact is, that Jacob did not know that Rachel had carried off her father's idolatrous figures. Laban accordingly examined all their tents, but could not find them, because Rachel had hidden them under her saddle. She had been convinced by her husband that all such figures were idolatrous, and therefore she wished that her father should become a convert to the worship of the true, Eternal God. Jacob, in his turn, then became angry with Laban, and said to him as follows:

"What is my trespass, what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hath thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night." Genesis 31: 36.

"Well," said Laban, "it does not signify, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you possess is mine; but yet the women are my daughters, and the children are my children; what can I do less for them? So let us make a covenant between us to part friends."

Jacob readily consented, and raised a stone, and set it up as a standard, and the rest of the party heaped stones round it, which formed a heap which

they called in Hebrew, *Gal-ide*. Here it was mutually agreed that neither of them should pass that boundary towards each other, to do mischief, or in any way to hurt each other; to which agreement they both bound themselves by oath. This being done, Jacob, with the truly pious feelings which always regulated his conduct, offered up a sacrifice to God. Afterwards all the parties partook of a feast, in the nature of a Covenant of Peace and Amity. Early the next morning, Laban took leave of his sons and daughters and returned homewards; while Jacob, full of joy and gratitude, hastened on towards Canaan.

Jacob had scarcely entered upon his journey, before he was met by the angels of God; and when he saw them, he said, "This is God's Host," and he called the name of that place, Mahanaim, which signifies *Two Hosts*. Those heavenly messengers, doubtlessly appeared, to assure Jacob of the Divine favor and protection; and the name which he gave the spot indicates his belief that their mission had his safeguard for its object. In fact, at this moment he stood in need of the interposition of Heaven, for he was approaching the residence of Esau, who was become the head of a powerful people. The meeting of the two brothers will form part of the subject of our next discourse, we shall therefore not anticipate it at present.

In this History, we see the Almighty continually watching over the welfare of the descendants of his

favored Abraham, according to the promise given at the "Covenant between the pieces." We also see that each of the Patriarchs had their several trials and difficulties. Abraham and Isaac had troubles from their neighbors, as well as others of a domestic kind; but Jacob seems to have found them especially in his own family. Sent away as a stranger, to escape his brother's anger, he falls in with his uncle, who under the cloak of love and friendship cheats him at every step—giving Leah to him, who was not his favorite, instead of Rachel, whom he ardently loved; and then making him serve seven years more, before he granted to him her, who was his first choice, and for whom, he willingly labored seven long years without fee or reward. Laban next takes advantage of him in reference to wages—he makes an agreement in which he appears to have a great benefit, notwithstanding the admission that he had grown wealthy through the care and good fortune of Jacob, and he does not wish to part with him, thinking him a blessing to his house; and so in fact he was, for we shall see that God prospered all his undertakings. We see also that when the agreement was made respecting the spotted cattle, God put it into the mind of Jacob to use a contrivance, which, according to nature *might*, and by God's blessings *did*, succeed. I say God put it into the mind of Jacob so to do; for the organization of the world is such, that a certain order of nature never ceases nor fails. Man, indeed, does not possess sufficient wisdom to see and

understand the whole train of actions; and as Man enjoys a free will to act as he pleases, he conducts himself in the way he thinks best; but this does not always answer—he sometimes succeeds and sometimes fails. But the Almighty, who ordains the fate of men and of kingdoms, occasions the actions of persons, which are quite voluntary on their part, to produce effects according to their various destinies; and thus the same circumstances which prove successful in some instances, are in others of no avail. God, who has his eye on the good and the pious, will ever bless their exertions; and though short-sighted mortals may not directly perceive this, yet, if a man be truly virtuous—if his heart be in the right place with his God—his actions will be properly regulated, and he need never fear the result. Thus, truly does the Divine Psalmist recommend: "Commit thy ways unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Psalms 37: 5.

DISCOURSE VIII.

FROM THE THIRD VERSE OF THE THIRTY-SECOND CHAPTER TO THE END OF CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX.

My dear young Friends:—

In this discourse we find a continuation of the history of the Patriarch Jacob, during his progress from Padan-Aram homeward towards Beersheba, where his father lived. In this journey, he was obliged to pass through the country under the dominion of his brother Esau.

You must bear in mind that Jacob had excited the hatred of his brother Esau by the surreptitious mode in which he had procured from his father the blessing unquestionably intended by Isaac for Esau, and that fearful of the consequences, Jacob took shelter in the house of his Uncle Laban, in order to be out of the reach of Esau, who meditated his destruction, as already fully detailed in a former discourse.

Many years had passed by; Jacob was now the father of a large family, and in the possession of great wealth and riches in flocks and herds. He was, therefore, very naturally afraid that in going through the country where Esau resided, the old

hatred might still be in existence. And, although possibly not in its original violence, might yet be sufficiently strong to induce some attempt on the part of Esau to seize on his property, or even to kill him and his family.

Jacob, therefore, thought it prudent to send messengers to Seir, where Esau dwelt, to announce his approach, and to deliver a summary account of himself and his proceedings in the most respectful terms, in order that Esau might not misuse him under the pretense of not knowing him, after an absence of more than twenty years, or form a wrong judgment of, where, and how, he had passed his time during that period.

Jacob certainly acted wisely in this instance, for Esau was at that time the Chief of a great and populous tract of land. The messengers returned, and did not tell Jacob that they had delivered the message, but that they had met Esau coming towards him, accompanied by four hundred men. This intelligence greatly alarmed Jacob, for he had no doubt that his brother had hostile designs against him, since he was coming with so powerful a force.

To make, therefore, the best of his circumstances, he divided his train into two companies, saying, "If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape." In this trying situation he addressed a prayer to Heaven, in which he modestly urged that promise upon which he had been hitherto enabled to encounter so many dangers and perils, saying:

"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee! I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff, I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother —from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Genesis 32: 9–11.

When Jacob had ended his prayer, he quitted his camp, and prepared some valuable presents of cattle, which he sent in advance of his company, with orders to those who had the charge of them, to say, when asked to whom they belonged, "They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present to my Lord Esau, and behold also he is behind us."

Having thus sent forward his present as a peace-offering, Jacob arranged the remainder of his train in excellent order, placing his beloved Rachel and her son Joseph in the rear, that if his brother should come as an enemy, they might have a better chance of escaping. Jacob then in the middle of the night removed his family and goods beyond the river Jabbok, a small river which falls into the Jordan, as a place of greater safety. Jacob remained behind, most probably employed in prayer and supplication.

At this place he met with an extraordinary adventure. A person appeared to approach him, whom,

in his agitated state, he probably imagined to be one of Esau's men, and with whom he began to wrestle. This person, however, did not conquer, (and we know that Jacob was a man of great strength, for we may recollect that when he first met Rachel, he removed a stone from off the well in Padan-Aram by his own power, which had always required the united strength of some of the Shepherds of that place). This wrestling lasted till morning, when his antagonist (whom he discovered to be a being of Superior order) said to Jacob, "Let me go"; No, said Jacob, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." By this, it seems that Jacob must have been sensible of the supernatural quality of the person who thus accosted him, and therefore it was in faith that he claimed his Blessing.

This being, in human form, was no less than an Angel, who, in reply to Jacob's request, asked his name, and changed it from Jacob to Israel, signifying a mighty Prince, or a Prince with God, and the reason is added, "For as a Prince thou hast power with God, and with men, and thou shalt prevail."

In this contest, however, the Angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh so that he halted, "by which Jacob knew that his antagonist had more power than he chose to exert. The design of this conflict, with the attendant circumstances, was most probably an assurance from the Almighty to Jacob that he should not fear his brother's power, but have full confidence in his God, who had never as yet forsaken him.

Jacob now wished to know the name of this wonderful being; but his curiosity was checked by the Angel's reply, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" Still, he gave him the desired Blessing.

On the departure of the Angel, the Patriarch, filled with grateful astonishment, called the place where this memorable interview took place, "*Peniel*"; for, said he, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Before Jacob met the Angel, his mind was greatly distressed with apprehensions; but now he was cheered, and satisfied that the "shield of Abraham" was his sure defense.

In later days, we find the Prophet Hosea commenting upon this circumstance; when speaking of Jacob's favor with God, he says: "By his strength Jacob had power with God, yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him." Hosea 12: 3, 4.

The Prophet, on that occasion, puts the posterity of Jacob in mind of the particular favors God had bestowed upon him, and that his superiority was brought about by the Divine will and power. God, who is the Lord of Angels, as well as men, so strengthened Jacob that he was able to prevail over the Angel, and hold him fast. Yet, as soon as he understood he was an Angel, he supplicated him; teaching us of the present day the lesson, that if our great ancestor Jacob acknowledged his mistake and made supplication to an Angel, how much more ought

we to do so to God, who is the Lord and master of all!

A remarkable commemoration of this occurrence is ordered by the law to be kept up to this day, which forbids the eating of that part of the hind quarter of the animal near the thigh, where Jacob on this occasion was injured. This is called in Hebrew, "*Geed Hanoshey*," "the sinew which shrank."

By this time, however, Esau reached Jacob, and contrary to expectation, ran towards him and embraced him tenderly, so that they both shed tears of Joy. Jacob, in a very respectful manner, introduced his Wives and Children. Esau inquired to whom all the great herd of cattle, which he had met on the way, belonged. Jacob said, it was a present intended for him; but Esau refused to accept it, saying: "I have enough; my Brother, keep that which thou hast unto thyself." Jacob, however, urges the acceptance of his present, as a sign of Brotherly love and renewed affection, and in gratitude for Esau's noble and generous spirit, in forgetting all past grievances.

And here let us remark, that he who blessed Jacob no doubt touched the heart of Esau, and changed his evil purposes into love and kindness. The once divided brothers unite in tender embrace, and they, who separated years ago under circumstances the most unfavorable and unsocial, now meet in affection and weep for joy. The dismal fears of Jacob are dispersed, and the angry passions of Esau are lost

forever. "Oh! how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Psalms 133 : 1.

What a beautiful and instructive picture is this! How it reproaches the unbrotherly conduct of those persons who, for little causes, and trifling affronts, or through mercenary motives, entertain deep resentment against their nearest relations.

Esau had some grounds for reproving Jacob, but no sooner did he see him, than the tide of natural affection rushed upon his heart, and all hatred and malice were at once obliterated. Mutual civilities and presents having passed between the reconciled brothers, they separated; Esau returning to his residence in Mount Seir, and Jacob journeying towards Canaan, where, on his arrival, he built himself a House, and made Booths for his cattle—for which reason the place was called "Succouth," which signifies *Booths*. After this, Jacob proceeded as far as Shalem, a city of Shechem, where he bought a piece of land, most likely with a design to settle there for a time—for here, according to the pious Custom of his forefathers, he immediately set about raising an Altar for the worship and glory of the living God, "the God of Israel."

But human Comforts are uncertain, and it often occurs that when a man has, in his own imagination, conquered the principal difficulties of life, and attained a place of rest for the remainder of his days, an unexpected evil arises, and destroys all his pleasing expectations.

Jacob had here settled himself, as he thought, to his satisfaction. He was at peace with his brother, and had become rich, and was happy in his family, when a keen stroke of domestic affliction attacked him, and he was again forced to wander, and seek a new Home.

Dinah, the only daughter of Jacob, went to visit the women of Shechem, where she was seen by Shechem, the son of Hamor, the chief of the country, who fell in love with her, forced her to his house, and wished to marry her. But her brothers were so much irritated at the conduct of Shechem towards their sister, that they resolved on revenge. They would not consent to intermarry with heathens, who were not circumcised, and of the Sacred Covenant. They stated that, as a reason for not granting their consent. Shechem, however, was too much in love, not to comply with that condition. He therefore submitted to the operation, and made all the folks in the town do the same. But Simeon and Levi, in a paroxysm of rage and fury, went up into the City, in the night, and killed all they could lay hands on, plundered the city, and returned with their Sister in triumph to their father's house.

Jacob, on hearing of what had occurred, was deeply struck with grief at this horrid deed, and justly feared that it would arouse all the neighboring nations against them. "What have you done?" cried he to his sons; "you have been revengeful and cruel. It is true that your sister has been

shamefully treated, and you think to be thereby justified, and to have served me by this? Your conduct will raise all the country around against me, and we, but few in number, will all be destroyed."

"What!" exclaimed Simeon and Levi; "shall we quietly bear the insult offered us?—shall we suffer our sister to be injured, and we not take vengeance? Surely, it were better to die than to submit to such disgrace."

Jacob, however, was never reconciled to this treacherous and atrocious act; for even on his death-bed, when he blessed all his children, he expressed his feelings with regret and detestation. In addressing his children, he couples the two, saying: "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations."

"O my soul, come not thou into their secret. Unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Genesis 49: 5–7.

It was natural for Jacob to apprehend that a confederacy would be formed among the Canaanites against him, but the "terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." Jacob now, by the command of God, left this part of the country, when finding that his children were beginning to be

contaminated with the idolatrous worship of the inhabitants, he said to them, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

Jacob's children readily gave him all their orna ments, which he buried under an oak in Shechem. Having fulfilled this duty, Jacob set out for Bethel, the ever-memorable place, when he fled from the angry face of his brother Esau, and where he had laid himself down to sleep on the cold earth, and where he had experienced the goodness of the Lord, and received that gracious promise which he afterwards saw so eminently fulfilled.

On his arrival at Bethel, Jacob built an altar, sacrificed and prayed to the great Eternal God, after the manner of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham.

At this place, the Almighty again appeared unto him, encouraged him in his duty, and renewed the promise so frequently expressed. Here, Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, died, and was buried beneath an oak, which was called "the oak of weeping," to express the sorrow occasioned by the loss of a faithful domestic. This was the prelude to a more distressing event, and to a mourning far more grievous; for, as they journeyed from Bethel, Rachel was taken sick and died, leaving an infant son, to whom

as she was expiring, the tender mother gave the emphatic name of Ben-Oni, the son of my sorrow, but his father afterwards altered it and called him Benjamiń, signifying, *the son of my right hand.*

After he had committed the remains of his beloved wife to the earth, and erected a pillar of remembrance over her grave, Jacob pursued his journey towards the residence of his father and his grandfather, where he arrived in safety after an absence of many years, checkered by a great variety of trials and deliverances, troubles and blessings.

His grief for the loss of his beloved wife was in some degree alleviated by the sight of his aged father, who was now one hundred and sixty-three years old. As no mention is made of Rebekah, perhaps she was already numbered with the dead; but if not, what must have been her delight at holding once more in her aged arms the child of her love, her partiality, and her apprehensions! Jacob has returned in health and increased in riches, and with a family of children—and to render the happy circumstance still more delightful, Esau is no longer his enemy, but his kind and affectionate friend.

Isaac, having lived to the age of one hundred and eighty years, died, when he was buried and deeply lamented by his two sons.

Esau, who had a large family and much cattle, was obliged to seek other pasture and leave Jacob to settle in Canaan, while he returned to Edom, there to settle himself and make it his resting-place.

The Bible, now, as on all such occasions, gives a long list of the generations of Esau, and then leaves off all further mention of their history, and proceeds with that of Jacob, whose descendants were destined to be the chosen people through whom the knowledge of the living God should be spread throughout the world. In looking at this list we can see that Esau was favorably regarded by Providence as the descendant of the pious Patriarchs.

He was, therefore, blessed with abundance and a very numerous family, the generations of whom are all mentioned in this section with the title of Duke or King; for instance: "These were the Dukes of the sons of Esau." Again, we find: "And these are the Kings that reigned in the land of Edom."

Thus was fulfilled the blessing of Isaac, given to Esau, in these words: "Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the Earth, and of the dew of Heaven above. And by thy sword shalt thou live." And we here see that they were brave people and great conquerors. So that, although Esau was not so pious as Jacob, yet we do not find that he was either idolatrous or wicked, and therefore God blessed him according to the promise given to Isaac on a former occasion: "And I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed for the sake of Abraham, my servant."

Thus we may observe in the history of all the Patriarchs, one principal trait, which is: a firm faith and full confidence in the goodness and mercy of

the Lord God of the Universe. This confidence supported Abraham through all his difficulties, and made him bear all his fatigues and trials with patience and submission. It was Isaac's principal comfort in his long state of blindness, and it was the strong support, of Jacob, amidst all the troubles and vexations which assailed him through life.

It is this trust in God, which is the only true comfort in life. On all occasions, it enlivens our hopes and animates us to action, in expectation of God's blessing. In the hour of distress it yields us that support which no human means can procure. The piety of the good Patriarchs never forsook them; all their successes in life, they imputed to the kindness and mercy of God. They bore with resignation and humility every affliction; and on all occasions, performed those acts of devotion, by which it was usual to express the religious feeling of the heart.

How carefully ought we to imitate their example, for we are equally indebted to the Almighty for our lives and all that we possess. May we ever be impressed with the idea of serving our God truly and religiously, from now and evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE IX.

FROM THE FIRST VERSE OF CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN TO THE END OF CHAPTER FORTY.

My dear young Friends:—

In our last address, we spoke of the settlement of the family of Esau in the country of Edom and Seir. The history now proceeds with the detail of the circumstances that occurred to Jacob and his family. After many wanderings and trials, Jacob had at last settled himself in the land of his fathers, in Canaan, the land which the Almighty had promised to Abraham as the one destined for his descendants. We shall soon find that Jacob was doomed to experience more troubles, and that his wanderings were not yet at an end.

In reading the various occurrences which brought this about, we shall have to notice how Divine Providence often directs things in a manner unaccountable to human wisdom, and the most unlikely and unpromising circumstances often bring about the greatest and best effects. The apparently voluntary actions of men—their troubles, misfortunes, nay, even their very crimes—are all made subservient

to the ultimate purposes of the Almighty Ruler of the Universe.

"And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the Land of Canaan." Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter; of these, Joseph was the favorite. He was the son of Rachel, his father's favorite wife; a very handsome and good-natured lad. It appears that Joseph was rather disliked by his brethren, especially by the sons of Leah, who were jealous of the partiality shown him by the father.

Joseph had unfortunately contracted a habit of tattling, and was continually telling every little idle tale to his father. This habit, which should not be encouraged, is too often productive of much mischief. His father, however, was excessively fond of him, and presented him with a very handsome "coat of many colors." This more especially excited the jealousy of his brothers—already irritated by his tale-bearing—so that they scarcely ever spoke to him in a friendly manner.

This division among brothers is one of the greatest misfortunes that can occur in a family, and is always productive of the greatest evil. Parents should be careful to teach their children to love each other, and not by favoring one more than the other, breed jealousy among them, the evil consequences of which this history exhibits a strong example.

Here opens the beautiful story of this wonderful youth, in whom we are interested when first he is

introduced to us. He was now in his seventeenth year, and to the elegance of external form, he added the brighter accomplishments and graces of virtue and piety. Is it then to be wondered at, that "Jacob should love Joseph more than all his children"? The permanent good qualities of the youth, when contrasted with the ungoverned tempers of his brethren, almost plead sufficient excuse for justifying the partiality. In this partiality to Joseph, were sown the seeds of numerous troubles to Jacob and his family; all, however, designed by Providence to bring forth good. Joseph, who was really a good-natured, chattering lad, one day very innocently related to his brothers a dream which had occurred to him in the night. He thought that they were together in the field making up the sheaves of corn, when, all those which the brothers had piled up, appeared to bow down to the one which Joseph had raised. At another time, he told them, he dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars all were making obeisance to him. Joseph's brethren, who were not in good humor with him, were not disposed to think the best of him; they therefore did not regard these dreams in the manner in which they were told by Joseph, which was, in pure simplicity of heart, merely relating a simple fact, but they attributed other motives to him, and became very angry at so much apparent self-sufficiency, as they termed it.

"What!" said the brethren, "shalt thou indeed reign over us?—or shalt thou indeed have dominion

over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words." Jacob, also, found fault with Joseph at the time, but nevertheless kept the thing in mind, considering it as indicative of something extraordinary and worthy of notice.

The elder sons of Jacob fed their flocks as far as Shechem, probably on account of the excellency of the pasturage as well as to preserve the land which their father had bought in that country, of Hamor. About this time it was, that the brethren proceeded to Shechem with their flocks; but instead of leaving their home in peace with all who were left behind, they encouraged feelings of jealousy and hatred against poor Joseph. And that they nourished this hatred even to the utmost is evident, from what followed.

Jacob, their father, could not be very easy in mind when reflecting that they were near to Shechem, the place where on a former occasion they had committed such cruelties. Being desirous of knowing how it fared with them, the Patriarch sent thither his beloved Joseph, little thinking that he should see him no more for many years. "And Israel said unto Joseph, do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them, to see whether it be well with them, and well with the flocks, and bring me word again." Joseph, ever kind and ever obedient, immediately answered, "Here I am, my dear father, to obey your bidding." Little did he imagine that the broth-

ers, about whose welfare he was to inquire, were at that moment plotting his destruction.

Joseph left his father's house never to return to it, and went in quest of his inhuman brethren. Not finding them at Shechem as expected, he went to Dothan, at which place, as told him by a stranger, they were feeding their flock. As soon as he came within sight, they began to deliberate how to gratify their hatred and malice towards him. "And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh! Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Genesis 37: 19.

Reuben, however, interfered, and prevented them putting into execution the horrid crime of fratricide, by urging on them to pause and reflect; saying to them, "shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him." Here we see the source of their sanguinary purposes. The dreams of Joseph had caused hatred to rankle in their gloomy minds. Envy, malice, and revenge took possession of their souls, and obliterated all fraternal love and humane feeling.

Far otherwise were the sensations of poor Joseph; fatigued as he must have been after so long a journey, he felt repaid and gratified at the sight of his brothers, about whom (not finding them at Shechem as he expected) he had felt some anxiety. But how different his reception! He springs forward to em-

brace his dear brothers, while they hastened to seize upon him as a prey! Instead of meeting with brothers and friends, he is fallen amongst the worst of enemies. His address is not regarded; his tale is stopped! His cloak, the envied badge of his father's kindness, is stripped off. In vain does he lift up his streaming eyes to Heaven—in vain does he implore for mercy—in vain does he conjure each separate brother by the most tender and affectionate names—in vain does he call upon his venerable father;—deaf to all entreaties and insensible to every feeling of humanity, he is stripped and cast into a pit. Luckily for poor Joseph, "the pit was empty, there was no water in it;" but most probably there might have been poisonous reptiles. These unnatural beings having thus consigned their brother to the greatest distress left him to perish for want, and set themselves down very contentedly to dinner, unmindful of every humane and social feeling. While congratulating themselves on their revenge, they perceived a caravan of Ishmaelites coming across from Gilead, and going towards Egypt. Judah, desirous of preventing the death of his brother, which, happening under such circumstances, would be no less a crime than actual murder, proposed to sell Joseph to these travelers; for, said he, by so doing, we may prevent our conscience being loaded with the horrid deed of frātricide. Accordingly they took Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the passing Midianites, who carried him to Egypt, and sold him as

a slave to Potiphar, an officer in the service of Pharoah, then King of Egypt.

Reuben, who had been absent at the time all this occurred, now on his return, repaired to the pit to look after Joseph; but finding that he was not there, exclaims in agony and sorrow: "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?"

Reuben, in fact, secretly wished to have saved Joseph, which he now found impossible; and indeed it was a matter of some consequence to determine what conduct should be pursued towards their father, whose inquiries respecting his beloved son, could not be so easily satisfied.

Here we leave, for a time, the innocent and oppressed Joseph, and return to the merciless crew in the Wilderness.

Not knowing what account to give to their father of his beloved child, and fearful that he would suspect them of some foul practice, they had recourse to an artifice, which shows their depravity in the strongest colors. Had they contrived some tale, by which Jacob might yet entertain a hope of seeing Joseph again, our resentment against them might be somewhat softened; but the bad men, disregarding the agony they would cause their father, carried him his darling's Coat, torn in tatters, and dyed in blood, and asked, with unfeeling indifference, whether he knew it, saying, at the same time, "this have we found; know now whether it be thy son's coat, or no."

Jacob knew the gaudy garment, the fatal source of so much mischief, too well; but he had no suspicion that the bearers of it were mocking him with a fictitious tale, and that they had actually deprived him of his beloved child. "And he said, it is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him—but he refused to be comforted; and he said, for I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him." Genesis 37: 33–35.

The grief of Jacob must have been intense! but with what face could his deceitful sons affect to administer comfort to him, while they withheld the only information which could afford balm to his heart?

If they had said, "Thy son liveth," but, "he is in the house of bondage," the cloud of sorrow, though heavy, would have been broken, and some faint rays of hope might have cheered the heart of the afflicted Jacob.

But the mighty secret, and the abundant consolation, must be deferred till the workings of Providence have attained their proper point. The whole Counsel was of God, though wicked men were following their own devices, and though the righteous, for a time, were in sorrow and affliction.

Here we must leave the Patriarch and his undutiful sons, to follow Joseph down into Egypt. He was

soon transferred, like a piece of merchandise, from the hands of traders, to Potiphar, an officer of rank, and Captain of the Guard to the Egyptian Monarch, as before stated. Joseph yielded to his lot with a good grace, and accommodated his mind to his circumstances with cheerfulness. The principles of pure religion had been sown early in the mind of Joseph, by his pious father; and they had, happily, taken root long before this misfortune befell him. Hence, he experienced consolation in this state of exile and slavery, and found that, though he was far removed from the arms of his fond parent, he was not removed from the presence and favor of his Father's God. Joseph, thus impressed, performed the part of a dutiful servant without murmuring; and, though brought up to different prospects, he was not sullen or dissatisfied in his menial situation. Potiphar appears to have been a man of discernment and consideration. He saw the good qualities of his servant, he admired the readiness with which he attended to his duties, and he found that his property was safe under his management. With much prudence, therefore, he made Joseph his steward, and committed unto him the entire direction of his household affairs.

Placed in this more elevated situation, Joseph attracted the notice of all around him. They could not behold the accomplished youth without admiration. Joseph, however, did not suffer this admiration to lead him from the path of virtue and integrity. He had a sacred regard for the honor of his Master,

and a grateful sense of the duty which he owed to him.

Joseph had at this time a severe trial of his faith in God and his duty to man. But the grand principle which supported him in this severe trial, was a holy fear of that Being, whose eye pervades the deepest recesses of the human heart. It would be well for all of us, if, when we are enticed to do that which is not right, we were to put Joseph's question to ourselves:

"How can I do this great Wickedness, and Sin against God?"

Joseph was unjustly accused with the committal of a crime by the wicked and designing wife of Potiphar. False evidence having been produced, which appeared to be corroborative of the statement made by the accuser, poor Joseph was found guilty by his master, who committed him to prison.

But good men are the same in every situation. Joseph, although confined in a prison among criminals, was quite at ease. He was conscientiously convinced that God would not desert him as long as he acted correctly and innocently, as was his case in this instance. Joseph was therefore constantly cheerful and willing to be employed, so that after a time the master of the prison perceived his value, and considering him a fit person for confidence, appointed him to the management of the prison, in the discharge of which duty, he gave great satisfaction. Thus does the Almighty prosper all

the actions of good and virtuous men in whatever situation they may chance to be placed. This was the case with Joseph; he left the vindication of his character to God, and possessing inward comfort and satisfaction, the dungeon became to him a palace.

Among the prisoners confined with Joseph were the King's Baker and his Butler. They were placed under the particular care of Joseph, who, one morning observing them both to be very melancholy, inquired the reason; to which they replied, that they had both had strange dreams, which made them very uneasy.

Joseph, to soothe their distress of mind, requested them to relate their dreams. The Butler then stated his dream to have been, that he thought he saw a vine, on which three bunches of grapes grew, blossomed, filled, and ripened, as it were, all in an instant; that he then took and pressed their juice into the King's cup, which he had in his hand, and placed it in that of Pharaoh's. Joseph explained this dream as follows: The three branches of grapes indicate three days, at the end of which, the Butler would be set free, and again set the cup in Pharaoh's hand as was his custom heretofore. "Now pray, added Joseph, "when all this shall come to pass and you shall be again restored to your former position, have the goodness to think of me, and procure my freedom; for I was stolen away from my family and sold for a slave. I am innocent of having committed any crime, and am unjustly placed here in this prison." The Baker,

hearing so favorable an interpretation, was thereby encouraged to tell his dream, which was as follows: He imagined he had three wicker baskets on his head full of pastry fit for the King's table, which the birds came and eat out of the basket while he was carrying them. This, Joseph interpreted in the following manner: "The three baskets," said Joseph, indicate three days, at the end of which, you will be taken from this dungeon to the place of execution, and there be hanged, and the birds of the air will devour your flesh."

These predictions were literally fulfilled as foretold by Joseph. Three days after this, was Pharaoh's birth day, on which occasion a great festival was held, when the Butler was restored to his former position, and the Baker was executed; precisely fulfilling the interpretation given by Joseph of their dreams.

The Butler, however, proved ungrateful; for, notwithstanding his restoration, he never more thought of poor Joseph; nor did he try to procure his freedom, or in any way show his gratitude for the good services of Joseph, but forgot him altogether, until a circumstance occurred by which he was, as it were compelled, though reluctantly, to bring Joseph to the notice of Pharaoh, as we shall read in our next discourse. It will there be shown that Joseph was not to owe any part of his future greatness to human kindness, or to worldly policy. The whole plan was of Divine origin, and all the steps therein, were

directed by Infinite Wisdom. Heaven accomplished the matter in a way which was to bring honor upon Joseph, by showing that a divine spirit rested upon him, and that he was the favorite of God.

In closing this discourse we have to repeat, and call your attention to, what we have before remarked. How careful parents ought to be not to favor one of their children in preference to another. Jealousy and hatred are excited thereby on the part of the other brothers and sisters who are not so favored, which, as is evident in this history, lays the foundation for much mischief and misery. It is highly improper for parents to encourage any favorite child to tell little tattling tales about things of no consequence, which always induce false impressions, and ultimately lead to very serious evils. This indiscreet management on the part of Jacob, and the fine silk coat which he gave to Joseph, besides his partial indulgence in keeping him at home instead of letting him take share in the fatigues of a shepherd's life, were the original causes of that hatred which led the brethren to be guilty at first of the desperate intention to commit murder—and at last to sell him as a slave. But all things, though they are in a great measure the acts of man, do not at all times produce the consequences originally intended by them. Their destined effects are bound in that chain of events which is preordained by Providence.

Now, this ill-treatment of Joseph instead of destroying him, as intended by his brethren, only led

to his being raised to the highest honor in Egypt, of which the cruel brothers could have had no possible expectation. Little did they imagine that Joseph, being truly pious and virtuous, deserved and experienced the care of Providence, for the Almighty never suffered the good conduct of Joseph to pass by, without being duly recorded. God's design was to raise Joseph to such a degree of greatness and power as should oblige his brethren humbly to bow down before him. Joseph's brethren opposed it, but what they did to humble him, was the first step by which God led him to elevation and glory. This may afford us great comfort under all troubles, as we may hence be assured that God can make whatever shall be designed against us, the means of promoting our happiness. We are taught here other important truths, viz.: that in permitting what happened to Joseph, God wished to remove the false notions mankind entertained respecting his Providence. They are apt to think he neglects the care of human affairs, when those that fear him are oppressed and in trouble. The Scripture overthrows their mistaken prejudices by the example of Joseph, over whom God was peculiarly watchful. The ways of God are inscrutable to man. Vain are all the attempts of mortals to thwart the designs of Providence. What God has foretold and promised shall surely come to pass even by the very instruments employed by his enemies to prevent it.

How applicable are the words of the Royal Psalmist to our present subject. He says, "The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked. The arms of the wicked shall be broken; but the Lord upholdeth the righteous." Psalms 37: 14–17. Amen.

DISCOURSE X.

FROM THE FIRST VERSE OF CHAPTER FORTY-ONE TO THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH VERSE OF CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR.

My dear young Friends:—

In closing the last discourse, I remarked that the events of this world are directed by a supernatural power, and that all the attempts of man to further his own purposes only tend to accelerate and to bring about by natural means that which is designed by Providence. The circumstances related in this Discourse will fully prove this fact.

We left Joseph immured in a prison on a false charge, without any friends to intercede on his behalf and afford him the opportunity of proving his innocence. But Joseph, who, throughout the whole of his career, is properly designated, "Joseph the righteous," put his trust in God, who knew his innocence, to effect his release.

The chief Butler, whose favor and interest Joseph had solicited, entirely neglected, and even forgot him. This is but too true a picture of man, who, when in *prosperity*, is apt to forget those who have served him in *adversity*. The Almighty, however,

always in due time, causes some circumstance to arise, which reward the virtuous for their good works, and proves a recompense for their sufferings.

Joseph had now been three years in prison. This may seem a long time to us, and may appear as though God had not been mindful of him. We might probably have looked upon him with great concern and pity, and sought to have procured his release. But God knew what was necessary to strengthen Joseph in humility, patience, and submission; he knew what was necessary to enable him to withstand the temptations and dangers to which he would be subjected, and he thus prepared him for his future position in life.

It was about this time that the King of Egypt had two remarkable dreams, which greatly troubled his mind. He sent for all the magicians and soothsayers (who in that country were a numerous and venerated class of men) to explain to him his dreams; but in vain did they exert all their skill to satisfy the King. This disappointment only served to aggravate the anxiety of Pharaoh, and to excite his curiosity to know what his dreams portended. The King, disquieted and unhappy, caused great excitement at the Egyptian Court. The chief Butler, recollecting his singular dream in the prison, and the exact interpretation which had been given it by Joseph, related the matter to Pharaoh, who immediately sent for Joseph from the prison to appear before him. If hitherto we had reason to admire Joseph as a son,

as a servant, and as a faithful officer in the Prison, we shall not be ashamed of him now that he stands before the King of Egypt.

The shepherd youth speaks with modest diffidence; yet in the most dignified language. When the King tells him that he has been informed of his skill in the interpretation of dreams, Joseph modestly replies, that the faculty was not to be ascribed to his wisdom, but says "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Here let us observe for our instruction, that the pious humility of an angel saint is impressive and beautiful; but the humble and devout declaration of Joseph is still more striking and more beautiful, because he stood at that moment in a circle of the most elevated persons, whose attention towards him was truly exciting, and his address was made to a mighty monarch, who, we find, did not even acknowledge the true God, mentioned by Joseph.

Pharaoh, pleased with Joseph's manner proceeds to relate to him as follows: "In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river; and behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favored; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favored, and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: and the lean and the ill-favored kine did eat up the first seven fat kine; and when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; for they were still ill-favored, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good; and, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears; and I told this unto the Magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me." Genesis 41: 17–24.

Joseph then proceeds to explain the dream as follows: that both dreams of Pharaoh indicated one thing; that the seven fat cows and the seven full ears of corn, were types of seven years of plenty; that the seven lean cows, and the seven thin and weather-beaten ears of corn implied seven years of famine which would swallow up all the plenty and blessings of the first seven years. Having finished, Joseph piously exclaims: "This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh; what God is about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh." He further says that these dreams having been seen in such quick succession, and in different shapes, signified the same thing, and implied that their fulfillment would be immediate. He therefore advised that steps be taken to establish granaries, for housing and saving the corn during the plentiful season, in order to preserve the empire from the dreadful effects of scarcity during the seven years of famine. This explanation was so natural and clear as to impress the minds of all who heard it, with the conviction of its being the truth. Pharaoh, struck with admiration at the modesty and wisdom of this wonderful young man,

declared to his courtiers, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" The King immediately resolved to be guided by his counsels; and Joseph, who but a few hours before, was a prisoner, now became the Prime Minister and Governor of Egypt. For, says the King, "For as much as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art; thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word, shall all my people be ruled—only on the throne will I be greater than thee."

Joseph was immediately placed in his office, as directed by the King of Egypt, and in the discharge of the duties thereof, proved himself the wise and upright man. He carefully did that which he advised and recommended. Joseph, though advanced to a high position, to wealth and to honor, did not indulge in luxury or idleness, but as a faithful and diligent servant, went all through the land of Egypt during the seven years of plenty, and established granaries in which he laid up stores of corn against the approaching scarcity.

That season came according to Joseph's prediction, and Egypt became convinced that the blessing of the Lord was with her through Joseph; for she was not only able to supply her own people with food, but even those of the surrounding countries, during the seven years of the famine.

Thirteen years had now elapsed, and we are again brought to Jacob's melancholy abode in Hebron.

The pious Patriarch had endured much and bitter anguish during this painful interval occasioned by the loss of his beloved Joseph. His blood-stained garment was, doubtless, often contemplated with sighs and tears. But even this sorrow had now to yield to another visitation, which tended to drown all other distresses—the want of Bread. Jacob had wealth in abundance, but that could not procure the necessaries of life, during the dreadful famine which spread itself throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Jacob, having heard that there was corn in Egypt, sent ten of his sons there with sufficient money to purchase corn for the family. Benjamin, however, who was the youngest and the only remaining son of his beloved Rachel, he kept at home.

Let us now turn our attention to Joseph and reflect upon his present position. This history is a strong proof that innocence and virtue are sure to meet with due reward; as also that the ultimate purposes of Providence are brought about by a variety of apparently independent, as well as natural circumstances, which produce effects never thought of, or calculated upon, by poor mistaken mortals.

Joseph had been placed in various stations of life. He was the favorite child of a tender and loving father. He had experienced the cruelty and treachery of his brothers—the ingratitude of courtiers—he had been a *shepherd*, a *slave*, an *upper-servant*, and a *prisoner*. He had thus been well exercised in the

school of adversity, which is highly calculated to render a man humble, discreet, and charitable—likewise, to fix a mind like Joseph's more thoroughly in its disposition to be dutiful and religious. He became therefore well acquainted with human nature, and knowing the instability of all earthly good, he was prepared to fill this elevated station, in which Pharaoh had placed him, with humility and propriety.

When the ten sons of Jacob arrived in Egypt, they found it was necessary to apply to the Governor personally, before they would be allowed to purchase any corn. When they were introduced, they did not, nor was it possible for them to know or imagine, that this exalted officer was their brother. Joseph, however, knew them, and recollected their treatment towards him. He was therefore determined to alarm them and make them feel their position; accordingly, with some degree of harshness, he asked them who they were, and what they wanted. The sons of Jacob bowed down to the earth and humbly replied, "they were the children of an aged father, whom they had left at home with their youngest brother, and that they had come at this time of scarcity to buy corn. Joseph affected not to believe them, and treated them as spies; telling them that he should not be otherwise convinced, unless they brought their youngest brother to him. Joseph persisted in charging them with bad designs, and with being no better than spies. He even caused them to be confined three days in prison; and when they were

brought before him again, he treated them in the same rough manner, insomuch that their conscience could not but accuse them of their guilty conduct towards their brother. They began to think that this was a judgment upon them for their unnatural behavior, and under this impression they vented upon each other keen reproaches for their barbarity to Joseph. "We are verily guilty," said they, "concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore behold also his blood is required." Joseph's brethren little thought that the rigid Governor was acquainted with their language, for they spoke in Hebrew, and therefore they were the more free in their mutual recriminations. It was, however, gratifying to Joseph's benevolent heart to perceive that they were not entirely dead to all moral feeling, and that they had at least a genuine sorrow on account of their injustice and cruelty. He was melted at the scene, and turned aside from them and wept. On recovering his composure, he conversed with them again upon their real intention in coming to Egypt; and, to prove their sincerity, he had Simeon bound, and placed in prison, as a hostage for their return with Benjamin, the younger brother, of whom they had spoken.

They were then sent away with a supply of corn for their families, and every man's money was secretly put into his sack's mouth by the order of Joseph. This circumstance was not discovered until

they were far out on their journey homeward; and when the money was found, they were all seized with fear and astonishment. Their conscience began to operate, and that which they ought to have regarded as a favorable sign, they interpreted as a judgment on them for their sins. On their arrival at home they related to their father the history of their journey; upon which, Jacob, full of grief at this new trouble, exclaims: "Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away—all these things are against me."

Poor Jacob, whose heart was almost broken at the loss of Joseph, his favorite child, positively refused to let Benjamin go with them, although Reuben offered to give his two sons as security for the safe return of Benjamin. The persuasions of Reuben were ineffectual. Jacob was deaf to all entreaties, and expressed himself in these terms of genuine affection: "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befall him on the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

The famine, however, continued, and the supply of corn became exhausted, and another journey to Egypt became necessary. Judah then appeals to his father, and plainly tells him that they cannot go down without Benjamin, because "the man had said: Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Compelled, therefore, by the necessity

of the case, though not without many painful struggles of nature, Jacob gave his consent, but prudently directed his sons to carry a present with them to the man to insure his favor. In the fervor of his piety he dismisses them with this prayer: "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

After some time, the brethren of Joseph returned to Egypt, bringing their younger brother, Benjamin, with them. On their arrival, Joseph caused them to be taken to his own house; and when the duties of his station were ended, he hastened home, being anxious to know the affairs of his father and family. He then asked: "Is your father well? the old man of whom ye spake, is he yet alive?" And they answered: Thy servant, our father, is in health; he is yet alive; and they bowed down their heads and made obeisance."

Joseph with an eager eye looked around the circle for his brother Benjamin, whom he had left a child in Canaan; and when he saw him, the tide of fraternal affection rushed strongly upon his heart, and he said:

"Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son."

Joseph's feelings began to be too much agitated—he therefore withdrew to a private chamber, there to give vent to his feelings by shedding tears. What delightful tears were those of this generous man in

that moment of retirement. His father alive and in health; his beloved brother Benjamin under his roof; and his other brethren brought to a sense of shame for their evil conduct; to all of which was added the delightful consideration, that he had it in his power to save his family in this time of dearth and famine.

A splendid entertainment was then prepared; the brethren were placed at a table by themselves, while Joseph sat alone,—and the Egyptians were seated at another table, because their religious scruples kept them from eating with the people of other countries. Here the brethren of Joseph were presented with another subject for surprise and conjecture. By his direction, they were all seated in the order of their birth. He gave them all presents, but that of Benjamin was five times more, than any other. These things filled their minds with veneration for the wonderful man, whose wisdom evidently appeared to them to be supernatural—for who, in a land where they were utter strangers, could have informed him of their particular ages?

This liberality and complacency of the Governor, at length dispelled all their fears, and the awe which they had felt in his presence,—and they feasted and were happy.

Joseph then commanded his brothers' sacks be filled with as much corn as they could carry, and also to have their money returned. At the same time, he ordered the cup out of which he usually drank, to be secretly placed in the sack belonging to

Benjamin. The next morning, early, the sons of Jacob started on their journey homeward; no doubt much pleased with their reception, wondering at the happy change, and delighted with the idea of returning to their father, with both Simeon and Benjamin. But they had scarcely left the city, when they were overtaken by Joseph's steward, who charged them with the theft of his master's cup. Conscious of their innocence, they readily submitted to a search, declaring that if the cup should be found, the guilty person should die, and the rest become slaves. The sacks were examined, but the cup was not found, to their great satisfaction; but how great must have been their astonishment and despair, when, on opening Benjamin's sack, the cup was found.

Overwhelmed with grief, the sons of Jacob returned immediately to the house of the Governor, when they fell to the ground before him, without speaking a word in defense, for it was needless to deny what could not be disproved.

The Governor, who, at their last interview was so pleasant and affable, was now again the stern Judge. "And Joseph said unto them, what deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not such a man as I can certainly divine." To this, they had no argument to offer, the fact was so plain, though they were not guilty. In this dilemma, Judah steps forward and speaks as follows: "What shall we say unto my Lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy

servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found. Joseph replies, "God forbid that I should do so; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father." Genesis 44: 16, 17.

In our next discourse, in which this history will be continued, we shall have to admire the beautiful effects of virtuous sentiments, filial affection, and brotherly love.

In conclusion, however, we are led to remark, that in this history we see that the purposes of Providence are in continual progress, and that the acts of man cannot possibly prevent them; on the contrary, man by his own acts forwards occurrences, the end of which, he can neither see nor understand. Wicked, as was the treatment Joseph experienced at the hands of his brethren, we yet see what a happy event resulted therefrom. It was the means of Joseph's transportation to Egypt, where, through his wise management, he saved all the surrounding nations from perishing by famine.

On the arrival of his brothers in Egypt to purchase corn, Joseph's feelings were strongly agitated—and probably he might have been inclined to punish them for their cruelty towards him. But his naturally good disposition—his love for his venerable father, who so fondly doated on him, and after whom, he so affectionately inquired, removed all unkindly feeling from his bosom, as we shall see hereafter, by the manner in which he treated them.

Determined, however, in the first instance to be severe with them, he pretended to doubt what they said. He put them in prison, and released them therefrom, only, on the condition that they should bring their younger brother, of whom they had spoken to him; and, on their departure, he gave them plenty of corn to take home, and even returned to each the purchase money.

On their coming the second time, he treated them handsomely, gave them plenty of corn, and again returned their money; but willing to try whether their feelings were changed towards him—whether they had repented of their ill usage to him, and whether they possessed that brotherly love which ought at all times exist among brothers—he caused the experiment to be made by charging Benjamin with theft,—considering that their conduct on this occasion, would prove their feelings and dispositions. For, if they should be callous and selfish, they would leave the apparent thief to his fate, and thus they would neither be worthy his countenance, nor his forgiveness for past injuries,—but, if they seemed at all afflicted, and adopted any measures to prove their affection for their brother—then Joseph would be convinced of the genuineness of their sentiments, and of their repentance for their former cruel conduct towards him, as well as of the restoration of fraternal affection.

The sequel will appear in our next discourse, in which you will see, that Joseph was not disappoint-

ed, and that he was completely reconciled with his brothers; and that this led to the happy result of bringing the long lost favorite child again to the bosom of his aged father, whose last days were spent in comfort and happiness, in the midst of his united and affectionate family.

DISCOURSE XI.

FROM THE EIGHTEENTH VERSE OF THE FORTY-FOURTH CHAPTER TO THE END OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH VERSE OF CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN.

My Dear Young Friends:—

We are now arrived at the most affecting period of the history of Joseph and his Brethren. You will recollect that in our last discourse we informed you how Benjamin had been charged with stealing Joseph's silver cup, and was about to be detained as a slave in Egypt, causing great sorrow and grief to all his brethren.

Judah, who had particularly pledged himself to his father to be responsible for the safe return of Benjamin, was the most concerned at this unfortunate circumstance. Judah, feeling the importance of his situation, stepped forward, and with all the energy of natural eloquence, addressed Joseph in a manner unparalleled in history. He did not attempt to palliate the crime charged to Benjamin, or to resist the force of the evidence which appeared against him, but he endeavored to work on the feelings of the Judge, and told a simple tale of woe with genuine

pathos; he spoke to the heart of his noble auditor, because he felt in his own, all that he expressed. Let us read the appeal of Judah in his own words.

"O my Lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word to my Lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh. My Lord asked his servants, saying, have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my Lord, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one: and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, bring him down unto me, that I may set thine eyes upon him. And we said unto my Lord, the lad cannot leave his father—for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

And thou saidst unto thy servants except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my Lord. And our father said, go again, and buy a little food. And we said, we cannot go down; if our youngest be with us then we will go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant, my father, said unto us, ye know that my wife bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, surely he is torn in pieces, and I saw him not since. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall

him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die; and thy servant shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, if I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame unto my father forever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father." Genesis 44: 18, etc.

The exquisite touches of nature in this piece—the reluctance of Jacob to part with the only remaining offspring of his beloved wife—the melancholy remembrance of the fate of his brother—and the observation, that the good old man's life was bound up in that of Benjamin, beautifully thrown into a parenthesis—could not but affect a generous heart with compassionate sympathy. Nor was the noble offer of Judah to remain a bondman, in the room of his brother, likely to pass without effect, upon the mind of a liberal man, like Joseph. But Judah's motive was likely to give it a peculiar interest on this occasion, as it was a pious concern for the peace and satisfaction of his aged father;—Judah feared, lest

by losing Benjamin, Jacob's heart should break, and his gray hairs be brought with unexampled sorrow to the grave. How various must have been the feelings of the several persons present while Judah thus earnestly appealed to the compassion of the Governor! How anxiously did the sons of Jacob watch the countenance of the Judge, to see what effect their brother's eloquence would produce in their behalf, whether it would result in a pardon or a condemnation! Joseph, indeed, could scarcely refrain from breaking in upon the narrative which interested him so much; and his assumed austerity soon gave way—it could not resist the rushing torrent of affection—the mighty secret must come forth—Joseph is now satisfied that his brothers are not destitute of filial as well as fraternal affection—all the feelings of a son and of a brother were in agitation—his whole soul expanded towards them, and he hastily commanded the attendants to withdraw, that there might be no intruding, curious observers of the approaching scene. The brethren looked at each other with silent amazement, as they perceived that there was something important in the action and countenance of the Viceroy.

The Egyptians being withdrawn, Joseph burst into a flood of tears, and said "*I am Joseph*,—doth my father yet live?" "And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence."

This silence appears to have been both natural and prudent. Had their conduct to Joseph been less

cruel than it was, the sudden and strange discovery of him, as the Governor of Egypt, must have struck them with astonishment; but to be told that this was the very Joseph upon whose death they had plotted, whom they had derided, stripped, and sold for a slave, what wonder then, that, instead of joy and gladness, it should have produced fear and trouble of heart?

But the magnanimity of Joseph was equal to his other eminent qualities. Instead of reproaching them—instead of even touching upon their unkindness towards him, he endeavored to soothe their agonized minds, and to palliate their guilt, by saying, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath famine been in the land; and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance; so now it was not you that sent me hither but God."

Joseph, having made this discovery of himself, fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. "Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them."

The brethren of Joseph now acquired confidence, and they entered into a free conversation with him respecting their father and the rest of the family in

Canaan. Joseph's first care was, now, to provide for the welfare of his relations, and to make them partakers of his prosperity. He therefore charged his brethren to hasten homewards, and to bring down to Egypt, as soon as possible, his father and all they had left in Canaan. "And ye shall tell my father, said he, of all my glory, and of all that ye have seen."

Now, we must not suppose that this order of Joseph to his brethren was the effect of Pride, and that he *vainly* desired that "all his glory" should be represented to his father. No! my dear friends; let us not think so unworthily of him. It was not ostentation, but dutiful concern and prudence that made him give this charge to his brethren. Jacob might be slow, perhaps, to believe the marvelous tidings brought to him by his sons—(as was in effect the case)—for old age is very reluctant to change its old home, for a land of strangers. Jacob had too much to fear from the Egyptians, who held the Canaanites in abhorrence; and it was therefore not likely that he would be readily persuaded to undertake so long and hazardous a journey. Joseph, well weighing all these circumstances, directed his brethren to relate all that they had seen in Egypt, and to represent his glory to his father, that he might be assured that his son possessed power sufficient to support and protect him, and all the family.

When Pharaoh was informed that Joseph's brethren were arrived, he was much pleased that Joseph

had found his relations. The generous Monarch immediately directed him to send carriages to bring down his father and all the family into Egypt, saying, at the same time, "regard not your stuff, or cattle, for the good of the land is yours." Joseph gratefully accepted the commission of his Sovereign, and sent a considerable train with his brethren, to whom he gave liberal presents; still showing his particular regard for Benjamin, by bestowing upon him a larger portion of raiment and money. Joseph then dismissed his brethren, properly equipped and provided with every convenience and comfort, both for his aged father and the family; and previously to their departure, he kindly gave them his advice, saying, "*See that ye fall not out by the way.*" He was apprehensive that a remembrance of their past behavior might produce mutual accusations and reproaches, the consequences of which might prove injurious to the mission upon which they were sent.

While the brethren are on their journey towards Canaan, let us turn our attention to the venerable Patriarch, who was anxiously waiting the return of his sons. How mysterious are the ways of Providence! and how remote from the comprehension of finite mortals! Though Jacob could, by Divine inspiration, predict the precise lot and circumstances of each of the tribes, (as we shall show,) yet he knew nothing of what was passing in Egypt. The time, however, had arrived, when Jacob's trials and troubles were to end. His sons return home with

the good tidings that Joseph still lives—and that he was in a position to comfort his father in his old age. How satisfied and grateful, was the good old Patriarch, at seeing Simeon, and embracing again his darling Benjamin! with what eagerness and anxiety did he inquire of his sons the particulars of what had happened to them on their journey, and the treatment they had received from the wise, though rigid Governor in Egypt! Yes, the sons of Jacob were prompt to inform their father, that this wonderful man, this seemingly severe, but kind, forgiving, and exalted Viceroy, is no other than his beloved Joseph! It is too much;—the tide of blessings runs too strong! Jacob's heart melts within him. The story appeared too marvelous to be believed at first! but when the wagons came in sight, which were dispatched by the Governor to bring his father and his family to Egypt, Jacob could no longer doubt that all, as related to him by his sons, *was* true. His spirit revived at the sight of these objects, which convinced him of the joyful truth—and he exclaimed:

"It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive! I will go and see him, before I die!"

Jacob hastily made the necessary arrangements, and set out on a journey, which, to one of his great age, was painful and difficult. But what are dangers and difficulties, fatigue or pain, to him who is about to be reunited to a beloved and long-lost child!

On coming to Beer-sheba, the place where his father Isaac once resided, and had been favored with

manifestations of the Divine protection, the Patriarch stopped to worship the Almighty, who had been so gracious to him; and probably to await His direction, whether it was His will that he should leave the land of promise and go down into Egypt.

The Almighty did appear to him in this place, and not only permitted him to pursue his journey, but added a promise that he would be with him in Egypt, and that his posterity should there become a great nation.

Thus encouraged, Jacob went down into Egypt, where he was met by Joseph, who "fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." The tenderness of this scene might have been described in more copious language, but the simplicity with which the Sacred Writer has touched it, far exceeds all the labored elegance of style. The first words of Jacob to Joseph, after a long and pathetic silence, were: "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

So great was Joseph in the esteem of Pharaoh, that the King assigned the land of Goshen, the best province in Egypt, for the residence of Jacob and his family. Joseph now introduced his father to his Royal Master; and the Patriarch in his priestly character blessed Pharaoh, or as it seems, supplicated the Divine favor for him.

The venerable appearance and the pious demeanor of Jacob led the monarch to inquire his age; to which he replied: "The days of the years of my

pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days and years of my life been, and I have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

This answer of the Patriarch was not the language of discontent, but the solemn reflection of a man who had experienced a large share of trouble, and who knew that the whole of human life is indeed but a vain show. Jacob spent the remainder of his days in tranquility and prosperity, enjoying the society of his beloved child during the period of seventeen years. The close of his life was a happy calm, after a varied and troublesome course. Of his last moments we shall have to speak in our next dissertation, as more properly belonging to that section, the last book of Genesis.

We are now to consider Joseph as a vigilant and provident statesman, in a season of peculiar distress and difficulty. The famine having continued two years, the private supply of the Egyptians was exhausted, and they were compelled to purchase corn from the public granaries, which greatly enriched the Royal Treasury. As long as the people had money, they bought corn of Joseph; but, in the sixth year of the famine, they were obliged to sell their cattle, and, in the last year, they were under the necessity of selling themselves and their lands.

We behold here a judicious and benevolent line of conduct pursued by Joseph. By his wisdom the seven years of famine were provided against, and by

laying the Egyptians under the necessity of selling their lands, he obtained that power which enabled him to render the country more fruitful than it ever had been, or indeed would be, if the inhabitants were not in a manner compelled to follow an agricultural life.

But though the people exchanged all their possessions, and even their liberty for corn, Joseph took no undue advantage of their necessities, and reserved only a fifth part of their estates for Pharaoh, as stated in these words: "And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have a fifth part, except the land of the Priests only, which became not Pharaoh's." Genesis 47: 26.

We must here notice, that in those days, the Egyptian Priests constituted the nobility of the land; they were the King's counselors, and in some matters his agents. They were, according to the opinion of the moderns, the most learned body of the nation, particularly in astronomy. They also acted as magistrates, and filled the chief offices of the State. Hence, we see the reason why Joseph did not purchase their lands, viz.: from the greatness of their authority, which rendered their persons and consequently their estates too sacred to be taxed, or alienated to the crown. The King, during the famine, distributed to them provisions sufficient for their subsistence, so that they were not under the necessity of selling their lands. Thus it was that the Priests

were permitted to continue in the possession of their landed property. Not so with the people in general; their minds as well as their bodies were so greatly affected, as to be incapable of devising means of subsistence.

But, when at length the river overflowed—watered the earth—revived drooping nature, and produced fertility, Joseph made the tour of the Kingdom; and summoning the respective landholders, restored to them such parts as they had sold to the King, on condition of their paying one-fifth as tribute to him by virtue of his prerogative—enjoining on them the same diligence in their improvements as though they were to reap the entire fruits of their labor. Transported at the returning prospect of plenty, and the restitution of their landed property, the people applied themselves to agriculture with unremitting assiduity, so that by this well-timed act of policy, Joseph established his own authority in Egypt, and increased the standing revenue of all its succeeding monarchs.

Thus far the subject of this section. In our next, we shall continue the history of Jacob and Joseph to the close of their lives, which subject will bring us to the end of the first of the five Books of Moses, called Genesis.

May Heaven assist us in our undertaking.

Amen.

DISCOURSE XII.

FROM THE TWENTY-EIGHTH VERSE OF CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN TO THE END OF THE FIFTIETH AND LAST CHAPTER OF THE BOOK.

My dear young Friends:—

In this section the history of the early Patriarchs of Israel is brought to a close. After having gone through many years of fatigue, trouble, and anxiety, Jacob enjoyed the last seventeen years of his life in comfort and happiness in the society of all his children. Jacob had now arrived at the age of one hundred and forty-seven years, surrounded by every thing which could render life pleasing and satisfactory. But "Israel must die." There is no exception from this stroke; and whether it happens at home or in a strange land, in Hebron or in Egypt, it matters little to him, who, like Jacob, has the divine Presence to bless him in his dying moments. Jacob perceiving that his dissolution was not far off, sent for Joseph, and made him promise, on oath, not to allow his body to be buried in Egypt, but to take it to Canaan, the land of his fathers, and there inter it in the family vault of his ancestors. A short time after this, Joseph was informed that his father was

very sick. He hastened therefore to his bedside, taking with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The aged grandfather, on being told of their coming, acquired fresh vigor, and exerting all his strength, sat up in the bed to receive his dutiful son and his children.

"I never reckoned," said he to Joseph, "again to behold *your* face, but lo! God has been pleased to let me behold even thy children." Joseph then placed his two sons before his father, in order to receive his last blessing. He put Manasseh the elder on the right, and Ephraim the younger, on the left. Jacob, however, crossed his hands, to lay his left hand on the head of Manasseh.

Joseph attempted to correct this arrangement, which he imagined to be a mistake, as his father's sight was dim; but Jacob persisted, and in the spirit of prophecy declared to Joseph, "I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations."

"And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh; and he placed Ephraim before Manasseh."

History informs us that the Patriarch's prediction was literally fulfilled, for, when the Israelites were numbered in the wilderness, Ephraim was reckoned before Manasseh, and was much more numerous than

he. In the encampment about the tabernacle, Ephraim had the standard, and was placed before Manasseh. From the tribe of Ephraim descended Joshua the successor of Moses, and Jeroboam King of Israel.

Before we proceed any further with our history, we must pause, and claim your attention to some few remarks which we have to offer on the importance which was attached, in ancient times, to the Blessings of pious men, and particularly to those of parents. In the early history of the Bible, we find it recorded that Melchizedek, who is designated "a Priest of the most high God," pronounced a blessing on Abraham, the founder of the true faith. The importance of the parental blessing is fully apparent at the great anxiety evinced by Rebekah to procure it for her favorite son Jacob; so much so, that even some contrivance was thought justifiable to obtain the first blessing from the Patriarch Isaac. Esau, though not of the most religious turn, yet felt disappointed when he found that his brother had supplanted him, and implored his father to bless him also, saying, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father?"

Jacob, on being introduced to Pharaoh, as well as when leaving his presence, pronounced a Blessing: "and Jacob blessed Pharaoh." And on the present occasion we find the same anxiety evinced on the part of Joseph to secure his father's first blessing for his children, Manasseh and Ephraim. Pharaoh, who

was an idolator, prayed to Moses and Aaron, saying, "And ye will bless me also," evidently showing the importance he attached to the Blessing of pious men like Moses and Aaron.

Numerous are the instances related in the sacred Volume where Blessings have been asked from persons who were considered competent, both in piety and virtue, to grant such requests. The dying beds of the righteous are awe-inspiring, and well calculated to make serious impressions on the minds of the young as well as of the old. Wisely, therefore, did Joseph act in bringing his children with him, that from the lips of their venerable ancestor they might learn the value of true Religion.

In reality, a Blessing may be considered as a devout prayer; an earnest pious wish on the part of him who utters it, that the Almighty God should prosper the person on whose head his hands are laid, or on whose behalf the blessing is invoked. When such a prayer is earnestly ejaculated, the impression is, that it will prove successful; and when that prayer or petition is solemnly declared by good and pious individuals, whose actions have rendered them worthy of favor in the sight of God, our hopes and expectations are raised in proportion. And truly impressive are such invocations when uttered by men like the Patriarchs of old, who were the peculiar objects of God's favor and who were in possession of the divine Gift of Prophecy. Here we see in Jacob an example of the *best last legacy*, parents should

leave to their children. What is the *best last advice* that they can give them? what are the most useful departing words that they can speak unto them? under what *surest protection* can they put their beloved children, whom they are going to leave amidst all the dangers of this troublesome world? It is confidence in Almighty God—in Him, who, if we walk in his ways, will protect and prosper us, and will supply our wants with the care of a watchful shepherd, and redeem us from all evil.

Jacob having experienced the singular care of Providence towards himself, could make his grandchildren understand what they might expect from the gracious God if they would lead a pious and virtuous life. Jacob foretold another particular relating to these two children: That their tribes should be so eminent and prosperous, that it should become a proverbial form of speech, when parents bless their children, to say, "God make you as happy as Ephraim and Manasseh." And this form of Prayer has continued from that period down to the present time among all Israelites, who, when they lay their hands on the heads of their children, pronounce this short but pious wish. It is in this manner that it has been the custom, from time immemorial, for parents to bless their children as already described. This ancient and very affectionate custom should neither be slighted by the young, nor neglected by the old. Let me ask any father, when his child comes to him with love and affection, respectfully inclining his

head to receive the paternal Blessing, whether he does not feel his heart moved? whether his love and fondness for his offspring are not both strongly roused, and whether he does not give the Blessing with the most earnest wish for its fulfillment?

The child likewise, by this custom, becomes pledged to look up to his parents as to superior beings, and to venerate as well as love them with all the ardor of filial affection.

Simple as this ancient custom may appear by the present enlightened age, it nevertheless has a tendency to encourage a mutual affection. The feeling becomes reciprocal and truly characteristic. Parental love is highly estimated, and filial gratitude habitually inculcated.

It is much to be regretted that this delightful custom is but too much neglected, and that the endearing ties of family love become less ardent by the disuse of this and many other old, but useful family customs, which, if properly attended to, would no doubt always insure feelings calculated to adorn the domestic hearth.

Let me exhort you, my young friends, to put a proper value on the blessing of your parents, and endeavor to be deserving of it by a loving and obedient behavior on all occasions. Then be assured that God will look down with kindness upon you, and grant you peace and happiness throughout life.

Having given Joseph his Blessing, Jacob said to

him, "Behold I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers." When Jacob had done speaking with Joseph, and perceiving his end fast approaching, he called all his sons together, that he might tell them what would happen to their posterity in future times—for the expression, "*In the last days*," signifies *hereafter*, or, *in time to come.*

This chapter calls for our strictest attention, as it contains a number of predictions which were to be fulfilled at distant periods through a long succession of years. On reflection it will be found that the contents of this chapter are of great value to us, and deserve our pious considerations, since they contain the sure word of prophecy, in confirmation of all our hopes in the coming of the Messiah, the destined harbinger of universal peace and happiness.

Considering, as we do, this to be a subject of great importance, we shall devote a chapter expressly to explain, as fully and clearly as we are able, these prophecies of Jacob, taking for our guide the opinions of those of our nation, considered, from time immemorial, as the most erudite, which we hope will be a sufficient guarantee for the correctness of our views on the subject.

Let us now return to the dying couch of the Patriarch. When Jacob had finished blessing his sons, he charged them to bury him in the cave of Machpelah, with Abraham and Isaac; and then, gathering his feet into the bed, "he yielded up the

Ghost, and was gathered unto his people." Joseph having closed the eyes of his father, and wept over him, commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm the body; and after having held a general mourning for the Patriarch during seventy days, he solicited the king's permission to go with the remains of his father into Canaan, to which Pharaoh readily consented; and sent with Joseph all the state officers and principal nobility of Egypt. When the procession reached the place of interment, the Canaanites expressed great surprise and astonishment, declaring, "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians." On their arrival at the threshing-floor of Atad, a place beyond the Jordan, they made a great lamentation, and held a mourning for Jacob during *seven days*. Hence the custom among Israel to mourn seven days after the burial of a *parent*, *wife*, *husband*, *child*, *brother*, or *sister*. This is called *shivah*. During these seven days the mourner remains at home, and does not attend to any business affairs whatever. From Joseph also is handed down the custom of the strict mourning during the thirty days after the death of any one of the relatives above named, which is called *sheloshim*—although Joseph kept the days of mourning previously to the burial, contrary to our present custom, because Jacob was embalmed, and capable of being kept without fear of injury to the living.

Thus have we brought the pious Jacob "unto the house appointed for the living," after a chequered

life of one hundred and forty-seven years, most of which was spent in exile and trouble. But confidence in God was his firm support, and by an obedience to the divine commands he was carried through all his trials, and brought, at last, to enjoy abundant peace and comfort. His mortal remains were preserved by the art of the physicians; but the Holy Spirit has embalmed his memory in the records of truth, so that his life stands as an instructive example to all generations.

Joseph having fulfilled the commands of his late father in this last pious office, returned with his brethren and all the company into Egypt. Joseph had now another opportunity of showing the generosity of his heart and the nobleness of his disposition. His brethren were apprehensive that the death of their father would draw forth, as they imagined, the latent spirit of revenge on the part of Joseph, and that they would now experience his vengeance for their evil treatment to him in his youthful days. Their guilty consciences made them afraid, and they judged, as wicked men always do, that the mind of Joseph was like their own, prone to resentment for evil. The life of their father, according to their judgment, was the only security they had against the resentment of their brother; but as this impediment was now removed, they had no doubt but that they should be made to feel, he had neither forgotten nor forgiven them. Impressed with these feelings, they sent a memorial to Joseph, humbly soliciting his pardon in the name of the God of their father.

This memorial was followed up by their appearing personally before him, and prostrating themselves, saying, "Behold, we be thy servants." Their supplicating address brought tears into Joseph's eyes, and it grieved him to think that his brethren should entertain the idea that he would act in any way unkindly towards them. His behavior to them on this occasion was not only conciliatory, but noble and generous.

"Fear not," says he "for am I in the place of God?" "Shall I," says the pious man, "take upon myself to avenge the injuries which I have sustained, when I have experienced so greatly the power, protection, and goodness of God?"

Impressed with this pious sentiment of Benevolence, Joseph endeavored to calm the fears of his brethren, by assuring them that they should enjoy his full favor and forgiveness. "True," says he, "ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not; I will nourish you and your little ones." "And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." Genesis 50: 21.

Who can sufficiently admire the mild and tender spirit of the kind and pious Joseph? In him we see all those sweet graces of religion which mark the man of God. He buries all recollection of past injuries in oblivion; he breathes assurances not only of forgiveness, but of the most tender affection; and

he turns the minds of his brethren to the infinite and adorable God, as the author and director of all that occurred for many years.

Joseph lived happily and comfortably with his brethren. The History of that period may be expressed in a few words. He had brought Egypt through a heavy trial to a great state of prosperity; he had been the happy instrument of saving his father's house from destruction; his brethren were settled in the most fertile portion of Egypt; and he lived to see his posterity of the fourth generation, in the line of Ephraim, and of the third, in that of Manasseh.

Crowned with the blessings of a considerate prince and a grateful people, he ended his days in peace at the age of one hundred and ten years. Gifted like his father with the spirit of prophecy, he left a charge with the Israelites, that when the time should come for their departure from Egypt, they should take his bones with them and bury them with his ancestors. This solemn injunction was strictly obeyed, as stated in Exodus: "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." And in all their journeyings through the wilderness, the Israelites carried the remains of Joseph until they arrived in the promised land; and when there, disposed of them as requested by him on his dying bed. Thus it is recorded in the last chapter of the Book of Joshua:

"And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in

Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph."

It is also stated, on veritable authority, that the Israelites raised a most magnificent monument over the grave of Joseph, in honor of the esteem in which he was held by all his brethren.

It is related by St. Jerome, a very eminent father of the Christian Church, who flourished about the latter part of the fourth century, that Joseph's monument was still to be seen in his days.

In the History of Joseph, we perceive the advantages of early piety and habitual integrity. His life is a beautiful lesson of instruction and encouragement to young persons to resist temptation, to have God or a sense of his divine presence constantly before them, to be diligent in their callings, affectionate in their social relations, calm and contented in whatever sphere they may be placed, faithful in offices of trust, and humble and devout in every station of life.

We have thus, by the assistance of Heaven, gone through the first Book of Moses, called Genesis. It contains one thousand five hundred and thirty-four verses, in fifty chapters, and is divided into twelve weekly portions.

All the Books contained in the sacred Volume are named from the words with which each commences.

In Hebrew the word *Bereshees* is the title of the *First*, signifying "*In a beginning.*" But the

Greeks, naming their Books from the subject of which they treat, have called this Book *Genesis*, or, *Generation*, because it relates to the creation of the World, etc., etc. The Book of Genesis contains the most remarkable events that happened during two thousand three hundred and sixty-nine years from that period. It gives us a minute account of the progress of the Creation, after it was called from chaos into existence, into that admirable order in which we trace the marks of Supreme Wisdom. It describes the primitive condition of mankind, gives us a graphical history of the human mind, and enables us to solve the problem which has so long embarrassed the heathen world, viz.: the introduction of moral evil. It points out to us noble examples, to animate us to virtue and inspire us with horror for vice, and uniformly calls upon us to adore and imitate the wisdom, the justice, the goodness, and the providence of our Beneficent Creator.

In conclusion, we hope that God will bless our labors to your improvement, my young friends, as well as to that of the rising generation in his holy Word. Amen.

APPENDIX.

DISCOURSE XIII.

FROM THE THIRD TO THE TWENTY-NINTH VERSE OF THE FORTY-NINTH CHAPTER OF GENESIS.

THIS section treats of Jacob's Prophetical Blessings to his Sons immediately before his death.

The Patriarch Jacob finding his end approaching, resolved to consecrate his few remaining hours in foretelling to his sons that which would happen to them in the latter days.

It must, however, be understood, that, what Jacob prophecied concerning his sons, alluded more especially to their descendants, the several tribes in Israel, as to what would happen to them after their settlement in the promised land. It must also be noticed, that what is commonly called Jacob's Blessings to his Sons, may be designated, his appointment of Twelve Rulers, or Princes, who should govern the house of Israel. That this form of Government did take place after the demise of Jacob, may be ascertained from the facts that Elders and Rulers were appointed to

superintend the affairs of the nation, and to instruct them in the Law. These Rulers were generally selected from the heads of each tribe in whom the power as before mentioned was invested; an example of which, we find in the Almighty's command to Moses:

"Go, and gather the *Elders* of Israel together. And Moses came and called for the *Elders* of the people.

"And Moses called unto them, and Aaron, and all the *Rulers* of the congregation returned unto him, and Moses talked with them." Exodus 34.

Jacob having thus prophesied Twelve Princes or Rulers of the people, addressed his sons as the heads of the people, and not as single persons: his words referring to the nation collectively, and not to them personally. This appears evident from the words of Moses, who says, "All these are the Twelve tribes of Israel," signifying, that all the predictions of Jacob were concerning the whole house of Israel collectively, and not to any single individuals. That our views on this subject are correct, will be shown in the following dissertation. We must further premise, that, for the full and clear understanding of our subject, we shall have occasionally to differ from the English Version, keeping close to the sense of the Original text.

"And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together that I may tell you, *that* which shall befall you in the last days.

Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father." Genesis 49: 1, 2.

The good old Patriarch having in a most emphatic and pathetic preface thus called the attention of his children, commences with his first-born in these words: "Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: He went up to my couch." Which may be rendered: Reuben, thou art my first-born, and the first fruits of my might and my strength; and as such thou art entitled to the right of primogeniture—the best portion in the inheritance—to the dignity of the Priesthood—and to the supreme authority over thy brethren. But all these prerogatives (like the unstable waters, that pass by, and return no more), are gone from thee; because, thou, little regarding the sacredness of thy father's couch, didst defile it and alienate it from me. As a punishment for this disobedient act, I pronounce the following sentence: That, though thou shalt form one of the tribes in Israel, yet thou shalt ever be far inferior to the rest of thy brethren, in number, wealth, and power. That this prediction of the Patriarch was literally fulfilled, may be gleaned from the following facts.

Biblical history shows, that the tribe of Reuben remained in apparent obscurity, and without any of

those marks of distinction which were generally annexed to the right of primogeniture, as, a double portion of inheritance, Supreme authority, and the Priesthood.

The Medrash, treating on this subject, makes the following comment:

"Reuben, through his indiscreet conduct, forfeited a three-fold dignity, viz.: Seniority, Priesthood, and regal power. The right of Seniority was given to Joseph, who accordingly had two portions allotted to him. The Priesthood was given to the tribe of Levi, and the regal power to that of Judah." Agreeably to Jacob's prediction, we do not find any thing great or excellent recorded of the tribe of Reuben throughout the Sacred Volume. On the contrary, in number and power it was much inferior to the other tribes, and the superior authority was not established in the tribe of Reuben, but in that of Judah, as we shall show when treating on that subject.

That the tribe of Reuben lived somewhat in obscurity, is shown by its having obtained from Moses certain possessions on the east side of the river Jordan, which position separated it from the main body of Israel. In consequence of this, it was exposed to various inroads, and subjected to many oppressions from its neighbors, whilst the Western tribes remained to a certain extent less annoyed.

With the tribe of Reuben were connected that of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who were among the first that were carried into captivity by Tiglath-

Pileser, King of Assyria, as recorded in the First Book of Chronicles, chapter 5: 1, 2, 26.

"Now the sons of Reuben, the first-born of Israel, for he was the first-born; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph; and the Genealogy is not to be reckoned after his birthright.

"For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; but the birthright *was* Joseph's."

The double portion, which was the right of the first-born, according to the Jewish law, was given to Joseph, whose two sons had each of them a portion in the land of Canaan, as though they had been the immediate sons of Jacob. Again, neither Reuben's nor Joseph's genealogy was placed at the head, because, though Joseph enjoyed the double portion, yet he had not the preëminence in other things to which the first-born was entitled—as the tribe of Judah was the most powerful, and in every respect preferred to the rest—for out of his tribe came the great Prince of the people, viz.: "David, King of Israel;" and in the "latter days" the Messiah, the Anointed of the Lord, who is expected, will also be from the tribe of Judah.

These are the proofs of the fulfilment of Jacob's prediction in reference to Reuben, that he should have no distinction whatever among his brethren, which is manifest from the following passage in the twenty-sixth verse of the fifth chapter of the First Book of Chronicles:

"And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, King of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-Pilnesser, King of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day."

We must here remark that these are the very places unto which Salmaneser afterwards carried the remainder of the ten tribes into captivity, as stated in the Second Book of Kings, chapter 17: 6:

"In the ninth year of Hoshea, the King of Assyria, took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor, by the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes;" and in the eleventh verse of the eighteenth chapter it is stated: "And the King of Assyria did carry away Israel into Assyria, and put them in Halah, and in Habor, by the river Gozan, and in the city of the Medes."

Now, there is a difference in the two statements; in the one, it is said "unto Hara," and in the other, "unto the cities of the Medes," which is, however, one and the same thing; for *Media* is the very same with "*Hara*," and which is by some writers called "*Ara*." This country was a barren and wild plain, incapable of fertilization. The meaning of the expression "unto this day," is, that these ten tribes did not return at the time when the other two returned from Babylon.

The places above named are all in Assyria. The

river Gozan, according to the opinion of some ancient writers, was the river Ganges, which ran through Hindostan, and which was subject to the Kings of Assyria. Others again are of opinion that the river Gozan is the same as the Sambatian, mentioned in Talmud Sanhedrin, folio 65, in the dialogue between Turnus Rufus and Rabbi Akeba. Turnus Rufus was desirous of knowing why the Jewish Sabbath should be considered the proper day of rest. In reply to which, the Rabbi adduces a proof from this very river, which is boisterous and stormy, casting up huge stones throughout the whole of the week, excepting Saturday, when it remains perfectly clear and calm. The learned Elias Levita, who flourished in the Sixteenth Century, states the following in his work entitled "Tishbi:"

"Sambatian is the name of a river, of which it is said, that throughout every day of the week it is violently agitated, throwing up such a quantity of huge stones as to render it impassable. Hence the reason why the ten tribes who are exiled in this place cannot release themselves therefrom—and fearful of profaning the Sabbath, they will not cross the river on that day, and prefer remaining in exile rather than violate the sanctity of the Sabbath." Tishbi, fol. 62.

Although this latter part is not strictly in connection with the subject in question, yet we have been induced to notice it, for the information of such of our readers as may not have access to the works in which this and many other facts are recorded.

SIMEON AND LEVI.

Jacob, having concluded with Reuben, addresses Simeon and Levi conjointly, emphatically declaring, "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations."

In these words the dying Patriarch expresses his utter abhorrence of the cruelty of these two brothers as exhibited in the barbarous wholesale murders of the people of Shechem, described in the Eighth Discourse:

"They are," says Jacob, "Brethren in iniquity, cruel and merciless in their counsels and deliberations;" referring to their treacherous scheme in the proposed alliance with Shechem and their sister Dinah. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall;" or, in other words, "Let my soul," says he, "never consent to, or participate in, their wicked designs, in their dark, mysterious plottings. Let not my honor be disgraced by joining their assembly; let it shun the very place they occupy, lest thereby it become polluted. For in their anger they slew a man." The word *man*, though in the singular, is here to be understood in a collective sense, it having reference to all the people of Shechem. The Hebrew word *shur* translated "a wall," signifies also *an ox*, also *an enemy*. Considering all the circumstances con-

nected with this affair, both renderings are admissible. The *first*, according to the opinion of some authors, who assert that they "ham-stringed the oxen of the Shechemites to render them unfit for labor; the *second* that, in their self-will they unnerved the enemy; referring to the cruel stratagem they had recourse to, in disabling the Shechemites, and thus falling upon them and cutting them to pieces in their defenseless state.

The Patriarch, grieved at heart at his sons' unheard-of cruelty, bursts forth with pious indignation, declaring "cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Jacob does not curse Simeon and Levi themselves, nor their posterity, but their unbridled passions, implying, "Let it be abhorred and appear execrable in the eyes of all the world." "I will divide them," says he, "I prophecy their division." It being usual in the prophetic style to speak of events which only God could bring about, as though the predictor himself were the author of them. Thus Jacob prophesied that Simeon and Levi, who were associated in wickedness, should, by the influence of Divine Providence, be separated from each other in their posterity, lest by their vicinity to one another they might, having the opportunity, follow the example of their ancestors, and associate themselves in wicked designs. The prediction of Jacob implied a double dispersion. First, the separation from each other, and then each

of them being interspersed among the rest of the tribes of Israel. That this was fully verified, may be seen from the following historical facts: For instance, the tribe of Simeon had no positive inheritance. One portion of it was placed in the midst of the tribe of Judah, and the other had to seek its habitation in the mountains of Seir, and in the desert of Gedor, as recorded in the Book of Joshua, 19: 1–9.

"And the second lot came forth to Simeon, *even* for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon; for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them." In the first book of Chronicles 4: 39–41, it is stated as follows: "And they went to the entrance of Gedor, even unto the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. And they found fat pasture and good, and the land was wide, and quiet, and peaceable; for they of Ham had dwelt there of old." And these written by name came in the days of Hezekiah King of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their rooms, because there was pasture there for their flocks." Now the names here referred to, are all mentioned in this chapter, and the

period when they performed these memorable exploits was in the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. This took place a short time before the ten tribes were carried into captivity. At that time, the tribe of Simeon being mixed up with that of Judah, and finding itself much inconvenienced, one portion of it made this expedition, while another portion settled itself in some part of the country of the Edomites, owing to the necessity of seeking subsistence. This must have occurred either when the Assyrians invaded their country, or when it was destroyed, as stated: "And they smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and dwelt there unto this day," signifying those who escaped from the hands of the kings Saul and David.

It is generally supposed that the king of Babylon did not disturb the descendants of Simeon in their new possessions, which, being small, he probably did not consider worthy of his attention, and thus they were allowed to remain there unmolested. Thus far we plainly see that the predictions of Jacob, in reference to Simeon, were literally fulfilled.

Let us now turn our attention to Levi. His descendants were distributed among all the rest of the tribes in Israel. The Levites had no fixed lot or portion of land assigned to them like the other tribes, who had each their allotted portion in the promised land. They had, however, by the command of the Almighty, a certain number of cities given to them in every tribe.

After the children of Israel had come into possession of the promised land, we are informed as follows: "And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the Lord, these cities and their suburbs." Joshua 21: 3. When the cities were set apart for this purpose, they were divided by lot among their several families, as the whole of the portion allotted to them was situated among the rest of the tribes. The cities thus apportioned to the Levites were forty-eight in number, as stated in Numbers 35, 36.

"So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities, these shall ye give with their suburbs."

Of these forty-eight cities, thirteen were given to the Priests who were the immediate descendants of Aaron—six of which were set apart as cities of refuge.

"All the cities of the children of Aaron, the Priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs." Joshua 21: 19.

These six cities of refuge* were set apart from those assigned to the priests for the security of such persons, who, without any design might accidentally commit a murder, and thus be exposed to the vengeance of the friends or relatives of the deceased. In order to claim the protection of the law under

* Of these cities of refuge we shall speak more fully in a future volume, should it please the Almighty to spare us to fulfil the task we have imposed on ourself.

such circumstances, such a murderer was compelled to seek refuge in one of those six cities.

The position which the Levites held among the people, and the manner in which they were disposed of among the several tribes, fully verify the predictions of their ancestor Jacob. The Levites, having no real inheritance in common with the other tribes in the land of Canaan, were provided for in the following manner: They were to minister in the Tabernacle erected in the Wilderness, and subsequently in the Temple at Jerusalem. In return for these services, they were entitled to receive the tithes of corn, fruit, and cattle, from each and every one of the other tribes, as a means of subsistence. The tribe of Levi was especially selected for this sacred function, as a reward for the zeal manifested by them in executing the command of Moses, to punish the idolatrous Israelites who worshiped the Golden Calf in the wilderness, during his stay on the Mount where he had been summoned by the Almighty to receive the Tables of the Law. This appointment of the tribe of Levi to so holy a calling, may be considered, as it were, a mitigation of the sentence pronounced against them by the Patriarch Jacob—for, unlike Simeon, who was compelled to seek subsistence far from his home, Levi was provided for by the Almighty, in giving him the tithes already mentioned, as a remuneration for his services in the cause of Religion. The Levites had, in their turn, to give to the priests a tenth of their tithes, considered as

the first fruits they were to offer up to the Lord, as the Israelites made their grateful acknowledgments to the Lord by offering their tithes to Him, so the Levites were to offer the tithe of their tithes for the use of the Priests, as commanded in the Book of Numbers, chap. 18 : 28 :

" Thus you shall offer an heave offering unto the Lord, of all your tithes which ye receive of the children of Israel ; and ye shall give thereof the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the Priest."

JUDAH.

Jacob having performed a severe and ungrateful task in the prophecies which he pronounced against Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, now casts his eyes on Judah, whom he addresses with all that love and affection which a happy parent bestows on a deserving child.

The subject of Jacob's blessing to Judah demands our serious consideration, having been exposed to various constructions and definitions, as to its real intent and meaning, by the learned of all ages. We may, however, be permitted to remark, that the true believer in Judaism will find no difficulty in understanding the subject, provided he will have confidence in the declarations made from time to time by the Prophets of the Lord, and other inspired men of

old, of whom we must speak in treating upon this subject. Jacob thus addressed Judah:

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be on the neck of thy enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee," or in other words, Thou art Judah, and well mayest thou be so called, for thy brethren shall praise thee, alluding to the name of Judah, which signifies in Hebrew, *praise*.

This compliment paid to Judah, is to be understood as applied to the whole tribe. That it should be more eminent than all the rest of the tribes, both for feats of war abroad, and for temporal and spiritual blessings at home. The inheritance which fell to the lot of Judah comprised the most southerly districts of Canaan, and was bounded on the *east* by the Dead Sea; on the *north* by the tribe of Benjamin; on the *west* by the tribes of Dan and Simeon (which lay between it and the Mediterranean), and on the *south* it extended to the mountains of Seir or Edom, which were the frontiers between it and Idumea. This land was beautifully diversified with hills and valleys, which produced plenty of corn, wine, oil, fruits, and an abundance of cattle.

This tribe was also the most numerous of all the rest, and its people the stoutest and the most valiant. It was, moreover, the chief and royal tribe from the death of Saul to the total extinction of monarchy among the descendants of Jacob. When the ten tribes revolted from the house of David, Judah and

Benjamin still remained attached to it, and constituted a kingdom under the denomination of Judah, which not only maintained its independence, but frequently gave proofs of superiority in the several contests between it and the tribes forming the kingdom of Israel. Judah led the van in the army of the twelve tribes. Judah was also the first that dispossessed the Canaanites, as stated, Judges 1 : 4 :

" And Judah went up, and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hands ; and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men."

" Thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies," implying victory, or putting their enemies to flight. That Judah was the conqueror, is fully detailed in the history of that tribe. " Thy father's children shall bow down before thee," intimating that they should acknowledge the dignity and superiority of this tribe above all the others. Thy brethren shall pay such honor to thee as would have been conferred upon the first-born of Israel. Thus we read in Numbers 7 : 12 : " And he that offered his offering the first day, was Nachshon the son of Aminadab, of the tribe of Judah." In the same book we read : " In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah, according to their armies, and over his host was Nachshon the son of Aminadab." Again, in the Book of Judges, " And the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, which of us shall go up first to the battle against the

children of Benjamin? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up first." In the first Book of Chronicles, 5 : 12, it is stated, "For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the Chief Ruler, but the birthright was Joseph's."

All these facts show that the tribe of Judah was destined not only to be the most powerful and valiant, but also that it would be preferred to all the rest of the tribes. And, in addition to all these distinctions, it was predicted that two great personages should descend from this tribe. *First*, David King of Israel; and the *second*, in the latter days, the *King Messiah*.

The first was fully verified in the person of David, whom God selected out of this tribe to establish the regal power in his line forever, in a temporal point of view, and the second will be verified in a spiritual, by the promised *Messiah*, whose kingdom shall be everlasting. These two points will be duly considered in the course of this dissertation.

"Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" Or in other words: Like a young lion shall my son fall upon his prey, and like an old lion, or a fierce lioness ready to rush upon it; who shall dare to confront him?

These expressions are allegorical descriptions of the courage and bravery of the tribe of Judah, evinced by its victories over the ancient possessors of

the land of Canaan. According to the opinions of some of the learned, the words, "from the prey, my son, thou art gone up," have reference to Judah's conduct towards Joseph, when his brothers conspired to slay him. Judah at that time nobly interposed, and remonstrated with them, and in order to save Joseph from the hands of his cruel brethren, proposed to sell him to the passing Ishmaelites; which was accordingly done, as mentioned in a former discourse. Jacob, at that time being so absorbed in grief for the loss of his favorite son, refused to be comforted, and considered all the brethren equally guilty. But now having been put in possession of all that occurred on that occasion, he declares his conviction that Judah was not an accomplice in that unbrotherly affair. We must, however, notice, in this verse, a certain gradation of terms, in reference to the wild beasts to which Judah was compared. First, to a lion's whelp, then to a grown lion, and finally to a lioness; for this, the Hebrew word *Labi*, which is translated *an old lion*, signifies, and which is generally supposed to be more fierce and formidable than the lion. Hence, the idea, that this gradation indicates the *beginning*, *increase*, *and full growth* of the power to be vested in the tribe of Judah. The figurative expression alluding to the manner of the lion couching down to rest in its den after having devoured its prey, denotes that the tribe of Judah should dwell fearlessly and at its ease, after it should have proved victorious over his enemies. This was

evidently fulfilled in the days of King Solomon, the son of David. "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon." Kings 1 : 4–25. Hence, the proverbial expression implying living in peace, plenty and security.

We shall now proceed to explain the *fourth* and *fifth* verses of this blessing, leaving the *third* for the last, it being the most important part of the prophecy, and requiring our more minute consideration. Jacob having first spoken to Judah as an individual, now foretells his prosperity as a tribe, in the beauty of the land he would inherit, depicted in the following words :

"Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vines ; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes ;" or in more familiar terms, His portion shall abound with such fertile vineyards, fruitful trees, and pasture grounds, that he shall tie his ass to the vine and palm tree, and wash his garments in the juice of the grape.

History testifies that Judah's portion fully answered the prediction of the Patriarch. It was a fertile land, full of vineyards, fruit trees, and noble pasture ground for cattle. In the portion of this tribe lay the Valley of *Eshcol*, or the *Brook of the Grape*, from which the spies (whom Moses sent to search the land) brought the bunch of grapes, as a specimen of the richness of the soil. Here was likewise the

brook, or torrent, of that name, along whose banks was the most delicious pasture land. Late travelers, who have been on the spot testify, that the mountains about *Jerusalem*, the portion of *Judah*, were particularly fitted for the cultivation of the vine; that there are many tokens still to be seen of the ancient vineyards about *Jerusalem* and *Hebron;* and that there are great quantities of grapes brought from that place to the markets at *Jerusalem* and sent annually to *Egypt*. They observe, also, that the mountains of this country abound in shrubs and a delicate short grass, of both of which the cattle are more fond than of such plants as are common to fallow grounds and meadows; and that the milk of cattle fed here is far more rich and delicious, and their flesh more sweet and nourishing. This seems to be signified in the following verse:

"His eyes shall be red with wine, and the teeth white with milk."

These words denote the plenty of wine and milk with which *Judah's* country should abound. Figuratively expressing that the health and comeliness of the inhabitants shall appear in the *radiance of the eyes and whiteness of the teeth*, and might be rendered, *His eyes shall be more beautiful than wine; his teeth whiter than milk.*

We shall now consider the third verse of Jacob's blessing to Judah, which is the most critical, and which has engaged the attention of the most eminent divines in all ages down to the present time. The

authorized English version renders this portion of the Blessing in the following words:

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

The meaning, as well as the completion of this prophesy being much disputed, both by Jews and Christians, we shall endeavor to explain it agreeably to the original text, which, in its plain and obvious sense, means; that—

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his feet, *forever*, because when Shiloh comes, unto him shall be the *gathering*, or *submission* of nations."

This is a literal translation of the words in the original Hebrew text, governed by the rules of the *Neginah*, or *musical accents*, which serve as the Biblical punctuation—for without these musical accents it would be difficult to understand the precise meaning of many passages in the Sacred Volume; and of this *one*, more especially, as we shall hereafter show. Our rendering of the text is supported by the most renowned Jewish authorities, both ancient and modern — and, when impartially investigated, will be found consistent by the searcher after truth. Past events materially bear out our views on this subject, and therefore it is presumed they will prove a sufficient guarantee for the fulfilment of the future. In order that our version may not be considered arbitrary, we shall notice severally the terms made use

of in the prophesy. Great objection is made by some critics of the modern school, to the rendering of the word *Shebet*, a *sceptre*. They insist that *Shebet* must mean a *tribe*, for, say they, "a sceptre did not exist in the days of Jacob." To set aside such objection, we must have recourse to history, which will give us the origin and use of the sceptre. Josephus relates that Pharaoh, desirous of conciliating the mind of his daughter, when she introduced Moses as her adopted child, put the crown on his head, which Moses, with a look of contempt, snatched off and spurned with his feet. This shows that a crown existed in those days. Now, it is the generally received opinion among all the ancient historians, that the sceptre was an ensign of royalty, and of greater antiquity than even the crown. The Greek tragedians, and other poets, put sceptres into the hands of kings, introduced in their dramas. The learned Justin, surnamed the Martyr, who traveled, like his predecessor Herodotus, into Egypt, to acquaint himself with ancient customs and usages, observes, that the sceptre, in its original form, was a *Hasta*, or *spear*. He adds, that in the most remote antiquity men adored the *Hastae* as immortal Gods, and that, even in his time, they still represented their Gods bearing sceptres. That princes and individuals of high rank frequently carried the sceptre, or other insignia of dignity in their hands, may be concluded from various passages in ancient history. Many examples occur in Homer. For instance: When Ther-

sites clamorously endeavored to excite the Greeks to sedition, Ulysses is described as striking him with the sceptre he had in his hand. The ancient sceptre derives its name from a Greek word, signifying *a staff to lean upon*. Neptune is always represented by both poets and painters, bearing a *Trident*, a three-pronged sceptre, as the name implies.

Now we would argue that, as no author, either ancient or modern, ascribes a higher antiquity to the crown than to the sceptre, why could not Jacob have been acquainted with the latter, after having been at the Egyptian court, and in the presence of the king. We see no reason, therefore, to doubt the existence of a sceptre among the ancients, supported as we are in our views on the subject by both historians and antiquarians; and therefore we insist that *Shebet* does mean a sceptre.

We will now consider the word *Mechokike*, properly rendered "a Law-giver," but which has also been subjected to severe criticism, and said to signify *a Dictator*, and not a *Law-giver*. To meet this objection, we must observe that the radix of *Mechokike* is *chokak*, which signifies to *engrave*, *mark*, *delineate*, etc., and in this sense it is to be understood to mean the writer of the Laws; and, therefore, with strict propriety to the rules of language, may be rendered *a Law-giver*. Moreover, this term is frequently accompanied by the word *sopher* (which in Hebrew signifies a *scribe*, or one who *relates*), to show the real value of the word, and how it should be applied,

the learned in general understanding it to be an ensign of judicial authority. Hence, Jacob could have had no other meaning than *a Law-giver*, which is plainly understood by the expression, "*from between his feet*," since it was the custom for the ruler of a nation to have his scribe sitting near him, to notify in writing or to delineate by figures all the laws and enactments made for the Government of the people.

There is, however, one passage in the Bible which the critics have availed themselves of, to favor their hypothesis in rendering the word *a Dictator or Military Commander*, viz.: Judges 5: 13—in the Song of the Prophetess Deborah, where she says: "Out of Machir came down Governors." Now let us consider this subject impartially. The Prophetess, having directed her praises to the Author of Israel's deliverance, proceeds to speak with commendation of those tribes who volunteered to go to battle on that occasion. She assigns the *first* place to the tribe of Ephraim, the *second* to the tribe of Benjamin, the *third* to that of Manasseh beyond Jordan, and the *fourth* to that of Zebulun. In speaking of Machir, the Prophetess says, "*Mechokakenu*, which *Rashi* remarks, signifies, in this place, *Rulers or Princes*, and the English Bible translates *Governors*." Zebulun following, classed with those expert in the art of writing—although by a figure of speech, and poetic license, the expression *Governor* or *Military Commander*, may be appropriately used—still, the

very connection of the offices of *Machir* and *Zebulun* serves to show that the idea the ancients had of the word *Mechokike* was a *Law-giver*, or *Law-maker*, and therefore the term, *Military Commander*, cannot be arbitrarily received as the sense in which it was used by Jacob.

In reference to the term *Dictator*, those who object to that of Law-giver endeavor to support their argument in favor of Dictator, by assigning that appelation to Moses, who, they say, was not a Law-giver, but a *Dictator of the nation*. Now, let us consider how Moses could be called a *Dictator* and not a *Law-giver*. In the first instance, we must trace the origin of the word *Dictator*, and prove by historical facts, that our objection to this term is founded in truth.

Dictator signifies a Roman Magistrate, created by the Senate, or people, on some extraordinary or great occasion, to command with sovereign authority, for a certain time, ordinarily limited to six months, and sometimes extended to twelve months. Recourse was never had to such an officer, but in dangerous and difficult times, as in sudden wars, popular factions, etc. The Dictator had absolute power, during his term of office. The origin of this office was unknown even in Livy's time, though some of the authors of antiquity speak of *Lartius Flavus* as the first Dictator who was appointed in the year of Rome 255. *Sylla* was the *first* perpetual Dictator, and Caesar the *next*. After Caesar there were no more Dictators.

The first Dictator chosen from among the people was *Marcus Rutilius*, created in 399. *Dionysius Halicarnasseus* derives the word from *ediecendo*, because they ordained and appointed what they pleased. But *Varro* will have the word derived from *diecere*, to name, because the Consul named or appointed the Dictator.

Now, if historical records can be relied upon, the foregoing explanation will be sufficient to prove, that Moses could not have had any idea of the office of *Dictator*, in the original sense of the term, as found in History.

What Moses meant by the expression, *Mechokike*, will no doubt settle the question.

Moses, having seen the Children of Israel vastly increased, and ready to enter the promised land, takes his farewell of them, and pronounces a dying blessing upon the people in general, and upon each tribe in particular; which, is in part *prophetical*, as was the blessing of Jacob—and after extolling the glory of God, and showing his love for his favorite people Israel, blessed all the tribes one by one, declaring what should happen to them after his death; for instance, in addressing Gad, he said:

"Blessed is he, that enlargeth the domains of Gad, he croucheth like a lion"—viz.: he lives fearlessly and secure though encompassed by his enemies—for Gad was a warlike tribe.

"And he teareth the arm with the crown of the head"—viz.: he kills rulers with their kings, for

rulers are the arms of the State, and the king is the head.

"And he saw or thought to provide the first part for himself"—viz.: he was among the first who viewed his portion in the conquered land, for the tribe of Gad desired to be settled on the farthest side of the Jordan, in the country of Sihon, with Reuben and half of Manasseh.

" Because there, in the portion allotted to him by the Law-giver, was he secured"—referring to the allotment made to him by Moses.

"And he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgment with Israel." Moses, in a spirit of prophecy, speaking of this as something *already* done, because he foresaw it *would* be done; viz.: that this valiant tribe should *come* along with the rest of the tribes, and execute the justice of the Lord upon their enemies, the Canaanites—for such was the agreement between Moses and them—which promise they faithfully kept, as stated. Joshua 22: 1.

Here, then, the meaning of *Mechokike* is perfectly clear and intelligible to every attentive reader of the Bible as the *Law-giver*, and not the *Dictator;* for, as already stated, the term, *Dictator*, was not known in the days of Moses—besides, Moses never gave any laws but those directed by the Almighty—and never inflicted any punishments for their breach other than those ordained from the same source. And, indeed, the spirit of meekness and obedience displayed by

him in the discharge of his divine mission—"For the man, Moses, was very meek and humble"—altogether precludes the idea of a Dictator or Law-maker, rather than that of the Law-giver which he was.

Our next consideration is the word *Shiloh*. Some maintain that Shiloh is the name of that celebrated city of the tribe of Ephraim, twelve miles from Shechem, and that it does not refer to the Messiah. Others again who admit that *Shiloh* does signify the Messiah, argue that the prophecy respecting the Messiah was fulfilled in the Author of Christianity; but they fail to prove the coming of the Messiah in him, because the completion of this prophecy was not manifest, inasmuch as even in those days the sceptre still continued among the Jews, they having still kings of their own in the persons of the Herods; although it is known that soon after, the regal power was entirely taken from them, and that the nation ceased to be any longer a body politic. Others, again, are of opinion that the sceptre has not entirely departed from the Jews even to this day, because it retains still a kind of sceptre or regal power beyond the river *Euphrates;* and that the *Nassi* or head of the tribes in that region, is a prince, lineally descended from Judah, whose splendor, dignity and power over his tribe is little inferior to that of a king. We do not, however, insist on receiving this as dogmatical, as it may only be an imaginary kingdom.

Our object is to show that the prophecy of Jacob foretold the coming of the Messiah, and that he signified the same in the word, *Shiloh*, which portends a *person*, and not a place, as some would understand it. Not to tire the reader by wading through the writings of ancient and modern Jewish authors of celebrity, we will give their version of the word *Shiloh* in as few words as possible. The word, *Shiloh*, in Hebrew, signifies *his son*, or *offspring;* although it is found as the name of a place where the Tabernacle was erected previously to the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Septuagint translates *Shiloh*, "the things reserved for *him;*" and some copies have—"*He for whom it is reserved;*"—the Syriac, "*He whose it is;*"—the Arabic, "*whose he is;*"—the Vulgate, "*He who is to be sent.*" In the Samaritan Text and Version it is, "*the peace-maker.*" Many others translate Shiloh, "*his son.*"

Shiloh has reference, say they, to two distinct individuals. The first was *David*, who was of the tribe of Judah—in whom was vested the regal power in a temporal point of view—and the second will be the *king Messiah*, who will have the regal power in a spiritual sense. In regard to our first point, that the prophecy refers to David who was of the tribe of Judah, it was most exactly accomplished in the state and polity of the tribe of *Judah* during the continuance of his sceptre, after the sceptres were removed, or departed, from the other tribes of Israel.

For the remnant of all the tribes, after the Assyrian Captivity, was indeed gathered unto Judah, and submitted to obedience under that one tribe; and the whole nation, from being called the people of Israel, was afterwards called the people of Judah, and, hence, probably the cognomen of *Jews*. In this sense, the prophecy began to operate immediately upon the division of the two kingdoms. God promised to Solomon to give one tribe to his son for his servant David's sake.

But in truth, two tribes—that of Judah and Benjamin—as also part of the tribe of Simeon, and many families of the Levites, and other tribes, who dwelt within the borders of the tribe of Judah, remained under the jurisdiction of the kingdom of Judah, and no other reason can be given why this body is called *the tribe*, but this, that the tribe of Judah alone maintained its power and constitution; for all the rest were gathered to this tribe and were incorporated with it, so that the one could not be distinguished from the other. This fact may be seen from the text itself; it is said that the Children of Israel dwelt in the cities of Judah—Rehoboam reigned over them; and when an account is given of Rehoboam raising forces to recover his kingdom, it is expressly said, that he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin. And yet, in the very verse before, it is said, "there were none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah!" Yet, still, when God sends a message to those under Rehoboam,

they are mentioned thus: "The house of Judah and Benjamin, and the remnant of the people." These, no doubt, were afterwards comprehended under the title of *Jews*, a term introduced to signify the tribe of Judah, and all the rest of the people united with and under that tribe.

All who came from other tribes were considered but as an additional strength to Judah. They preserved no distinct polity of their own, as belonging to other tribes.

From the time of the Assyrian Captivity, the case is very plain. There remained without doubt many private families and persons in the land, who escaped in the general confusion. They did exist as parts of distinct tribes, but fell under the dominion and power of Judah—as appears in the reformation made by King Josiah, which reached not only to the cities of Judah, but to all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, to the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali—cities in which the Kings of Judah had no influence or authority, so long as the separate kingdom of Israel existed. After the return from the Babylonian Captivity, we hear of but little else than Jews, though we know the Benjamites were united with them, and (the decree of Cyrus being a general permission for the return of all the tribes) that many families of other tribes returned to their own country. But all these were gathered to Judah and became one people—and in this state and condition things continued till the

final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Roman power.

The ten tribes which constituted the kingdom of Israel, were carried into captivity about seven hundred years before the Christian era, and this put an end to the existence of these tribes. They have never recovered or appeared as a people or nation from that time to the present.

The division of the kingdom prepared the way thus far, for the first part of the prophecy, viz.: the suspension of the regal power for a time. Had all the tribes continued under one head, they would probably have undergone the same fate; but being divided in interest, and having different kings, and consequently not being concerned together, in matters of peace and war, their fortunes proved very different,—for the Assyrian Captivity was the ruin of the ten tribes,—but the Babylonian Captivity was only a seventy years' punishment of Judah.

The seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity is the only period of time that can create any difficulty upon this head. But when we consider that the Jews were not carried to Babylon to be slaves, but were transported as a colony, to people the great and newly enlarged City of Babylon; that they were commanded by the Prophet "to build houses and plant gardens," and to seek the peace of the City, in which they were captives (circumstances which prove them not to have been slaves in Babylon); and that at the expiration of the seventy

years, many of them were so well settled in ease and plenty that they refused to return to their own country; and, furthermore, if we consider that the Jews lived at Babylon as a distinct people, were governed in their own affairs by their own rulers and elders, appointed feasts and fasts, and ordered all matters relating to their own civil and ecclesiastical affairs,—we shall to a great extent, if not altogether, remove the apparent difficulty;—all these facts tending to prove to us, that the power and sceptre of Judah were not removed during this captivity, as stated in Tract Sanhedrin, folio 5, page 1: "These are the heads of the Captivity who ruled Israel with the sceptre."

Again, certain it is, from the accounts recorded in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, that the tribes of Judah and Benjamin kept regular genealogical records. That they had likewise their chiefs and elders who decided matters for them there can be no doubt, since they are mentioned by Ezra and Nehemiah as the persons managing the great affairs of the return and reëstablishment of the service of God in Jerusalem.

That they came back to their own country as a people and nation, governed by their own laws, is evident from the complaint made against them to Artaxerxes, in which they are represented too great to be thought a mere set of slaves subject to a foreign yoke, without law or government of their own.

True, from the time of the Captivity, the people

were not so free as they had been formerly,—they lived under subjection to the Persian monarchs, and under the Empires of the Greeks and Romans, to the last hour of their final dispersion; but still they lived, during that time, as a distinct people, governed by their own laws.

From this deduction it appears evident that the sceptre, or the power of government, did depart from all the other tribes long before Judah's, as also that the power was continued to its posterity, as above stated, even while in captivity, and only departed from it at the final dispersion of the nation from Palestine, when the people were scattered all over the face of the globe, as we see at the present day. It was then that the sceptre did depart from Judah, and the tribe is now so far from bearing rule, that it is not known with certainty which is the tribe of Judah.

That no one being has yet appeared, answering to the description of the *Shiloh* predicted by the inspired Patriarch, is evident beyond dispute, from the fact that *all nations* have not as yet concentrated themselves into one band, united in peace and harmony with each other, according to the prophecies foretold throughout the sacred volume.

Now let us turn our attention to the latter part of the verse—"and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

The Hebrew word *Yikhas* does not literally signify a *gathering*—but rather *submission*. Although the

authorized version may not be objectionable, as, in a philosophical sense—*submission*, finally, may be inferred from an assemblage of persons convened for a specific object, to listen and assent to what may be proposed. There is but one opinion on the subject that *Yikhas* signifies *submission*. Yet we will quote one authority which we trust will suffice. The learned author of the Zemach David, in his Hebrew and Chaldaic Lexicon, writes thus under the head of *Yoko*, viz.: "*Auscultare*" signifies *to obey*—and in illustration of the same, he quotes *Yikhas* from our text, which he translates *acceptatio praecepti*—"*The compliance with a precept*," or in other words, *submission to commands given.*

From this particular promise made to Judah, we infer that his sceptre shall not depart *forever*, because Shiloh will come and restore his power and sovereignty; that the sceptres of all the other tribes shall depart from them before the time predicted for the coming of *Shiloh*, and that they shall not continue till that period, each as a respective tribe or people, under its own government, but shall be scattered all over the face of the globe, and fall under the government of others. This has evidently been fulfilled to the letter, confirming all the prophetic predictions of the inspired messengers of the God of Israel, from the time of the Divine Legislator, Moses, down to Malachi, with whom all prophetical visions ceased.

There is an important point to notice in this most

interesting subject. From the words, "that his sceptre should not depart from Judah *forever*," because Shiloh will come, we must infer that it shall depart then; for when the annointed of the Lord shall appear to restore Israel to his former glory, the *King Messiah* will reign supreme over all the inhabitants of the earth, introducing general peace, and uninterrupted happiness, causing a cessation of all warfare and bickering among mankind, as beautifully depicted by the poets of old, under the name of the "Golden Age." Then will be verified the expression, "*forever*," in its true sense, viz.: the temporal power will be suspended, and a spiritual and more sublime government will be instituted in its stead. For the expression, "*forever*," must not be taken in the same acceptation as the term, *never*, for such was not the intention of the Prophetic Sire, since, as we have already notified, in a temporal point of view, the regal power has departed, or rather has been suspended for a time, until the divine fiat shall go forth, commanding his *annointed* to collect the scattered forces of his favorite and chosen people, for the purposes above mentioned, viz.: for the benefit of mankind in general. This seems to be the plain and true sense of the words, "the sceptre shall not depart," etc., for let it be properly noticed, that the word *Shebet*, which we translate *sceptre*, signifies a rod or staff of any kind, and the insignium of office, and the authority of those who bear the same. This meaning helps us to fix and determine the sense

of the word *Mechokike*, properly rendered "a Law-giver." And the word itself signifies not only a Law-giver, or a maker of laws, but also he who dispenseth them, or administers justice according to the laws; and as the term *Mechokike* is qualified by the words, "from between his feet," it plainly means nothing else than — as we have already explained—that the Law-giver will of a certainty descend from the tribe of Judah, as invariably understood throughout the Sacred Volume, and be closely connected with the regal power to dispense the laws and enactments which may be dictated by such authority.

Having thus commented on *what* should not depart from Judah *forever*, because a particular circumstance will come to pass, we trust that from the proofs advanced by the Sacred Volume, we have been treading on safe ground in our version of the text—and thus have set aside all vain hypotheses on so important a subject touching the true interests and spirit of Judaism — we will now conclude with these few following remarks: It appears clear to our understanding, that none else but the *Messiah* is meant in this prophecy of Jacob, in which idea we are supported by almost every expounder of Holy Writ among all nations. For whatever construction they place on the word *Shiloh*, whatever be its derivation, or whomsoever they mean by it, the *Messiah* is the person plainly intended. We Israelites have but one opinion on the subject—that the Messiah is

yet to come, and that the said Messiah is to be through the line of David, he being the lineal descendant of Judah, in the fulfilment of his father Jacob's Blessing, as bequeathed to him in the manner already described. It is not our province to descant on the validity of the meaning attached to the said prophecy, by the nations at large; our duty extends no further than to teach our own brethren what the true signification of the text is, and to endeavor, as much as possible, by plain and correct inference, to impress upon the minds of our co-religionists the truth of this prophetic Blessing, and to fix their faith unalterably. We do not mean by this to shut out any inquiry on a subject so important to our welfare, as a people of God's own planting, but such inquiry must be based on *faith* and *reason*. *Faith*, as the privilege and blessing of the believer in God's holy word — and *reason*, to guide us in such a path as not to distort the text from its legitimate bearing and tendency. Sophistry must not be permitted as argument, and vainly designated as reason; it cannot be admitted as synonymous with the latter, by either the law-giver or the philologist, and forms no part of the education of the philosophic mind, nor in any way assists it to a mathematical solution of any given problem. If our reasoning on this point be rational, if we justly deduce consequences from premises, without which they must prove futile, how much more correct will our ideas be when considered in relation to *faith* and *religion*.

These are, and must be, held as indispensably cemented, and as the undeviating principles upon which depends the happiness of the whole race of beings on this probationary planet.

The more we consider this wonderful prophecy of the Patriarch Jacob, and the present state of our nation, which remains a perpetual witness of its truth, the more room we see for our faith in God, and the constant hope that he will fulfil his divine promise—the evidences of which meet us with irresistible force, when we contemplate our position among the nations of the earth. It dispels all the clouds of doubt, and shines forth with all the radiant light of truth.

O! most adorable wisdom! thou hast so laid the foundations of truth that they can never be moved, that, whether we consult our own reasoning faculties, which thou hast bestowed on mankind in general, or whether we turn back to the ancient records of thy will, which thou, in thy infinite wisdom, hast committed to the keeping of thy beloved and chosen people, we find convincing proofs that thou hast determined, in thy wise counsels—that "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his feet, *forever*, because *Shiloh will come*, and unto him shall be the *gathering* or *submission* of nations."

ZEBULUN.

In treating on the prophecy of Jacob concerning the posterity of Zebulun, we must remark, that, according to age, Issachar should have preceded Zebulun. Yet, we find that Jacob addressed the former first, though he was the younger of the two; for which no especial reason can be assigned, unless we conclude that the Patriarch foresaw that the lot and portion of Zebulun would be superior to that of Issachar. Our conjecture is not without some grounds,—for if Jacob had actually been present at the division of the promised land, he could not have given a more exact description of Zebulun's lot, than he did, then, two hundred and fifty years before it took place.

The Patriarch in a very few words declares: "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the Sea; and and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon." Or, in other words: "Zebulun's dwellings shall spread themselves along the borders of the Sea, and he shall stretch his commodious harbors as far as the City of Zidon."

It is generally supposed, that the haven of the Sea where Zebulun dwelt was near the lake of Tiberias, or Sea of Galilee, to which the east border of this tribe extended. Its portion reached along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea—the one end bordering on *this*—and the other, on the Sea of Tiberias. This appears to be so, from the facts recorded

in the Book of Joshua, in the allotment of each tribe's portion in the land of Canaan.

Some commentators consider the expression, "towards Zidon," implies: his situation shall be such, that by means of his shipping he may readily traffic with Zidon.

It was in this spirit that Moses in his last words coupled Zebulun with Issachar, saying: "Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents;"—meaning, that these two tribes, though being at the greatest distance north, should still come together to the Temple at Jerusalem, and bring along with them all the other tribes who dwelt in the immediate countries; and that dwelling on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, they should apply themselves to trade and navigation, and in the manufacture of metals and glass—which is implied by the words, "Treasures hidden in the Sand." The River Belus which was situated in this tribe's portion, had a certain description of sand which was found well calculated for the making of glass.

We may also mention, that when the tribe of Zebulun left Egypt, it had for its chief, Eliab, the son of Elon, and numbered fifty-seven thousand and four hundred men able to bear arms—as stated in Numbers 1: 31: "Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred."

In another review, thirty-nine years later, this tribe numbered sixty thousand and five hundred

men capable of bearing arms, as stated. Numbers 26: 27.

The Bible also informs us of the warlike character of this tribe—that, when they joined the tribe of Naphtali, they both distinguished themselves in the war of Barak and Deborah against Sisera, the General of the armies of Jaban. Judges 4.

It is generally supposed that these two tribes were among the first Israelites who were carried into captivity beyond the Euphrates by Pul and Tiglath Pileser, Kings of Assyria, as recorded in the first Book of Chronicles, Chap. 5: 26.

In reviewing these facts, we may justly admire the exactness of Jacob's predictions, that he should, so many years before the Conquest of Canaan, be enabled so clearly to describe the precise situation of the respective places which were to be the lot of his posterity. It was by this means, that the several tribes were taught to understand that their settlement in the promised land was not the mere effect of chance, or, that it was gained by their own prowess and warlike achievements, but that they should consider it as the especial gift of God in corroboration of the minute prediction given by Jacob on his dying couch.

ISSACHAR.

No less wonderful and exact was the Patriarch in the description of the tribe of Issachar, and the portion that was assigned to it. We find that this tribe had one of the richest and most fertile spots in all the land of Canaan. Jacob addresses Issachar in the following figurative language, and which cannot be literally understood. He says: "Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens," signifying brawny, strong, robust. The ass is considered a patient animal, and a proper symbol of labor, for in eastern countries it was principally employed as a beast of burden.

These expressions would, therefore, denote that Issachar's posterity should devote themselves to the quiet and retired occupation of tillage and husbandry; and instead of being engaged in merchandise, and other active scenes of life, like their brethren of the tribe of Zebulun, that they would be lovers of peace and rest.

This interpretation exactly agrees with the words of Moses, who, when speaking of Zebulun, declares, "Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; Issachar in thy tents."

"Couching down between two burdens," figuratively marks the tame and indolent temper of this tribe, and that it would rather submit to the heaviest taxes and impositions than engage in any warlike pursuits, or political disagreements. Just like the ass,

which, however strong, will go tamely couching with a burden on either shoulder; and, rather than shake it off, will quietly lie down under it.

This description may be considered a fair specimen of the character of Issachar's posterity. Their history acquaints us that they patiently cultivated their lands, abiding within their own territory, a peace-loving race. Yet they did at all times contribute their aid to the common cause, when the Israelites were oppressed by foreign nations, by paying considerable taxes in exchange for personal services. Their peaceable disposition was the cause of their having been subjected to frequent invasions by strangers, who took advantage of their neutrality—more especially in the days of the Judges and rulers in Israel. On these occasions they purchased their security by submission and tribute rather than struggle for their independence on the field of battle.

The text continues: "And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant, and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute." The tribe of Issachar had its inheritance in that portion of the land along the great plain or valley of Jezreel, with the half tribe of Manasseh on the South, that of Zebulun on the North, the Mediterranean on the West, and Jordan with the extremity of the Sea of Tiberias on the East. That they possessed one of the most fertile and pleasant tracts of land in Canaan appears from Josephus' description of the Upper and Lower Galilee, which included the

territories of this tribe. "The country," says he, "is fruitful to admiration, abounding with pastures and nurseries of all kinds, so that it would make any man in love with husbandry."

And the latter part of the prophetic blessing, "And became a servant to tribute," was literally fulfilled in the days of the Judges, as already noticed, when the whole body of the nation became tributary to the neighboring kings, and chiefly the posterity of Issachar on account of the fertility of their soil. And when Moses, in his last moments, declared, "Issachar shall dwell in thy tents," he signified that while Zebulun should rejoice in his mercantile, active life, in going abroad to traffic, Issachar should remain at home to enjoy the pleasures of a country life, engaged in husbandry and agricultural pursuits, as also in the study of the law, and the understanding of the times and seasons, in order properly to know the right periods for sowing, planting, and tilling the land.

This is the generally-received acceptation of the expression, "Issachar delighting, or choosing, to dwell in tents.

DAN.

Jacob now proceeds to address Dan, one of the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid. Jacob plainly intimates that the sons of the handmaids should enjoy equal privileges with those of his other children, and

be the heads and judges of their own tribes. In alluding to Dan, the Patriarch declares: "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel," signifying he shall judge his people, that is, his own tribe, like the rest of the twelve tribes.

Jacob's intention was no doubt to let it be understood among his sons, that though Dan was the son of a handmaid, (and therefore might be considered inferior to the other brothers,) yet, his posterity should be governed by a head of their own tribe, equal to the other tribes of Israel. And we venture to state, that what Jacob says here of Dan, may be applicable, by analogy, to all his other sons born of the two handmaids.

"Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path; that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." By these expressions it is understood that the tribe of Dan should be noted for their stratagems in war, defeating their enemies more by policy than power—comparing them to the serpent which lurks in the road, and, when least expected, bites the heel of the horse, thus causing him to throw his rider.

The word *Nachash*," in Hebrew, signifies, in the common acceptation, a serpent in general, which, as some suppose, does not possess such qualities as are here described by Jacob. Most commentators are of opinion that the serpent here alluded to, is of that kind called by the Greeks "*cerastes*," which has two fleshy horns. Its instinct is, to hide itself in the

sand and fasten itself on the horse's heel, thus disabling the animal, which then throws its rider.

It is the generally-received opinion that this prophecy was fulfilled when Samson, who was a descendant of Dan, pulled down the great Temple of the Philistines, which crushed to death both him and them.

After the death of Joshua there were nine Judges who ruled over Israel—eight of these judges were defeated by the several powers which waged war against them. Samson, however, proved an exception. He represented the serpent, figuratively alluded to by his ancester Jacob. For Samson certainly did avenge himself on his enemies for the treachery they practiced towards him in the cruel act of putting out his eyes.

Samson was the last Judge in Israel. After his death commenced the reign of kings. Saul was the first king annointed by Samuel the prophet, in obedience to the command of the Almighty. In reference to Samson, we must remark, that there appears no doubt but that he was the person of whom Jacob prophecied, and that he intimated, that though Dan's tribe was but small, (he having had but one son,) yet it should produce one of the most famous rulers in Israel. We must also notice, that, though Dan had but one son, yet this tribe proved numerous in proportion, for on leaving Egypt it numbered sixty-two thousand and seven hundred men able to bear arms, as stated in Numbers 1: 38: "Those that

were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Dan, were three score and two thousand and seven hundred."

The Patriarch Jacob, favored by inspiration, saw that Samson would be in danger, and that after all his strategy and warlike exploits, there would be no earthly salvation for him. Under this impression, and in pity for his descendant, he pours out his soul in supplication to his God, piously exclaiming, "O God, I await thy salvation." Some writers have questioned the propriety of this passionate ejaculation of the Patriarch in favor of Samson, whom he evidently meant in this particular instance. For, say they, such a prayer might have accompanied the blessings of Gad—Asher, and Napthali, or even any of the other tribes, equally as well as that of the tribe of Dan. A little reflection, however, will relieve us from this apparent difficulty. In examining the circumstances of the rest of the tribes, it appears that this prayer of Jacob was exactly suited to the purpose of Samson only, and not to any other person mentioned in this history. We indorse this opinion from the facts connected with the last bold act of Samson, when he had concluded to punish his enemies, the Philistines, who put out his eyes, and thus rendered him unfit to take up arms against them. When Samson stood before the portals of the Great Temple of the Philistines, and, laying his hands upon the two outward pillars, prayed to the Lord in these words: "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee,

and strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." Judges 16 : 28.

The Almighty granted his prayer; not, however, to compensate him for the loss of his two eyes, since that was caused by his own folly, but to punish the Philistines for their wickedness and continued assaults upon God's own people. This fact proves the truth of the Patriarch's prediction, and shows that his prayer to the Almighty on behalf of Samson, must have been the effect of inspiration, by which he saw the trouble in which Samson would be ; otherwise it would be somewhat difficult to reconcile our mind to the propriety of this passionate wish for salvation, on behalf of Dan especially, and not for any of the rest of his brethren.

GAD.

Jacob having dismissed Dan, who was the son of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, now turns to the two sons of Zilpah, the handmaid of Leah, viz. : Gad and Asher, and he leaves Naphtali, the second son of Bilhah, until he has concluded with Gad and Asher, although in point of order Naphtali should have followed his brother Dan. To some probably it might appear of no moment who is named first or last, but Jacob had an object in view in this, as well as in all he did in reference to his children's future position in

life. In this instance, he was desirous of leaving his household in peace after his departure from this world, and therefore he divided his attention between the sons of the two handmaids, in order not to create any jealousy on the part of the two wives, Leah and Rachel.

When Gad was born, his mother being overjoyed on the occasion, exclaimed, "a troop cometh," and she called his name *Gad*, which signifies in Hebrew *a troop*. Jacob addresses Gad in the following terms: "Gad, a troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last," implying that Gad would be frequently infested by bands of robbers and plunderers; but that he would ultimately prove the conqueror.

Jacob's prediction was realized. The tribe of Gad inherited a frontier country beyond the Jordan, and was much exposed to the incursions of the neighboring people, particularly the Ammonites; but these were at length completely subdued in the days of the Judges, by Jeptha the Gileadite, as stated. Judges 11: 32, 33:

"So Jephtha passed over unto the children of Ammon, to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.

And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel."

History informs us that the prediction of Jacob

concerning this tribe, as in all the rest, was fully verified. The plundering Arabs were constantly annoying them—and it was only by the bravery and constant watchfulness on the part of the Gadites that not only were the Arabs prevented from committing any serious depredations, but were often severely punished by the Gadites.

The prophecy concerning Gad had, no doubt, particular reference to the continued conflicts his descendants had with the *Hagarites*, viz.: *Nephish*, *Jetur*, and *Nodab*, whom they at length conquered, taking from them, in one battle, fifty thousand camels, two hundred and fifty thousand sheep, and one hundred thousand men, prisoners. 1 Chronicles 5: 19, 20, 21.

We are supported in our version of the text and its application by Moses, who, when giving his last blessing to Israel, declares, in reference to the tribe of Gad: "Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad; he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head." Deut. 33: 20. Signifying in other words, "Blessed be Gad, who hath allotted to him such a large inheritance; he dwelleth as a lion," meaning, he lives fearlessly and secure though surrounded by numerous enemies; "and he teareth the arm with the crown of the head," implying, as Onkelos renders it, "killing Princes with their Kings;" for Princes are considered as the arms of the State, and the King the head thereof.

We find also that Gad was among the first who

selected his lot in the conquered land. We read in the book of Numbers, that this tribe desired to be settled on the farther side of the Jordan, in the country of Sihon, with Reuben, and part of the tribe of Manasseh. Gad's portion was situated between Reuben *south*, and Manasseh *north*, with the mountains of Gilead *east*, and Jordan *west*.

Gad answered very minutely to what was foretold of him, both in number and courage. On the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, the tribe of Gad numbered forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. This tribe was foremost in the battle against the Canaanites, it being the most powerful—agreeably to the covenant made with Moses, that when the land should be taken, they were to inherit their portion on the other side of the Jordan—and hence it was that Moses declared in advance: "And he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel." Deut. 33: 21.

ASHER.

Jacob now turns his attention to Asher, the second son of Zilpah, the handmaid of Leah, and thus addresses him:

"Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties," which implies, Asher's

portion shall make him happy; it shall abound with excellent corn and oil; the bread and dainty meats that shall be made of them shall be fit for a king's table. The blessing given to Asher may be rendered in a two-fold sense, hence our paraphrase, which embodies both—and which is supported by facts in history, viz.: That his country should be the most fertile, and produce the best corn in Palestine, and that it should abound with the finest and most delicious oils, used to flavor the most delicate kinds of royal dainties. On this account we have selected such terms as would express the two excellencies of the beautiful soil in the portion allotted to the tribe of Asher. That we opine correctly, may be seen by the last blessing of Moses, who, when speaking of Asher, says: "And let him dip his foot in oil," signifying, He shall be situated in a rich soil, where oil shall be in such plenty that he may not only wash his face, but even his feet in it.

This prophetic blessing was remarkably fulfilled; for Asher's portion of land yielded the finest and purest oil throughout the whole of Canaan. The tribe of Asher was promised a fruitful tract of land, abounding, not only, with all the provisions necessary to sustain life, but even with a supply of the choicest fruits fit for the festive board of kings and princes. Such a tract of land was accordingly allotted to the tribe of Asher, at the distribution of the promised land among the twelve tribes. The inheritance of the tribe of Asher was along the sea coast, stretch-

ing from Sidon on the north, to Mount Carmel on the south. But the northern portion, viz.: from Tyre northward, this tribe never possessed, because the Phœnicians, who inhabited that portion of the country, were not expelled. These Phœnicians are supposed by some not to have been pure Canaanites, but a mixture of them, with a Cuthite colony from Egypt. Asher's situation was the most northerly of the tribes, having that of Naphtali on the west, and Zebulun on the south.

That the portion allotted to the tribe of Asher was a beautiful tract of land, especially Mount Carmel, may be inferred from the Prophet Isaiah, in the twenty-fifth chapter of his book, where he says: "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it; the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." Carmel was a most delightfully woody mountain, famous for its excellent cedars; and Sharon, a most beautiful field for good pasture. So that, all these facts combined, express the great and superior excellency of Asher's portion, and thus plainly assure us of the truth of the prophetic spirit in which the Patriarch dispensed his blessings to all his children, for, without admitting this fact, it would be impossible for us to account for the fulfilment, in so minute a degree, of all the Patriarch's blessings.

NAPHTALI.

Naphtali, the second son of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, comes next in order to receive his dying father's blessing. Jacob, in a few words declares, "Naphtali is a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words."

In order to make this blessing somewhat more intelligible, we submit the following paraphrase:

"Naphtali, like a hind newly escaped, or let loose, shall excel his brethren in swiftness, and be distintinguished for the sweetness of his eloquence."

The blessing of Jacob to Naphtali had, no doubt, reference to two particular qualifications in his character. The one, swiftness, like the hind, which is noted for his speed, the other, eloquence, in bringing pleasant tidings.

According to the opinions of some of the Chaldee paraphrasts, Jacob had reference in his blessing to the part taken by Naphtali, when Joseph's brethren were dispatched to inform their father that he was still alive, and that he held the high position of Governor in Egypt. On that occasion, it is said, that Naphtali was foremost in the rank, and was the first who arrived home to convey the pleasing intelligence. Naphtali performed this duty in so eloquent and beautiful a style, that it at once made the desired impression, and removed all doubt from the mind of Jacob as to the truth of the report. Another version of the text runs thus: That Jacob compared Naphtali to a well spread oak, which shoots forth

beautiful foliage. And in this sense it was fulfilled, by the extraordinary fruitfulness of his tribe. Naphtali brought with him four sons, when he went down to Egypt. In the course of two hundred years, this tribe consisted of no less than fifty-three thousand men fit to bear arms. This simile may also be applied to the fruitfulness of the territory of that tribe, which was located in the upper Galilee, a country celebrated for its pleasant and prolific soil. This idea agrees with the benediction of Moses in favor of this tribe, when he says:

"O Naphtali, satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord, possess thou the West and the South." Deut. 33: 23.

Some commentators render instead of the "West," the "Sea," as the Hebrew word will admit of either translation. The Sea referred to by them, was that of Gennesareth, which was on the south side of the inheritance of this tribe. It extended into the upper and lower Galilee, having Jordan on the east, the tribes of Asher and Zebulun on the west, Lebanon on the north, and the tribe of Issachar on the south. In this manner we see, that in whatever way we render the text, all subsequent events in the history of this tribe show the prophetic spirit in which both Jacob and Moses spake. In the one sense, it has reference to Barak, who proved victorious in the great battle fought between him and Sisera, the General of Jabin, king of the Canaanites; and in the second, to the sweet words which Deborah and

he sang in the noble Canticle which was composed on that memorable occasion. In this song Deborah gratefully declares:

"Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." Judges 4: 18.

Out of these two tribes, Barak, by command of God, drew ten thousand men, who charged the enemy from Mount Tabor, on which occasion, as stated by the Prophetess, they fought bravely, and gallantly exposed themselves to the most imminent danger on the field of battle. Not less brave were they when called upon in the days of Gideon, to assist him in his pursuit after the Midianites: "And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites." Judges 7: 23.

It is generally supposed that this flight of the Midianites was caused by a stratgem, brought about by the alertness of the messengers dispatched to decoy the enemy, by which the Israelites were enabled to pour down upon them unexpectedly and intercept them in their flight. The Book of Chronicles, also, informs us that this tribe distinguished itself at the coronation of King David. On that occasion appeared one thousand Captains and thirty-seven thousand troops, bringing with them large quantities of provisions, in honor of that joyous event.

It is thus clearly shown, that in whatever sense we

render the text, the spirit of prophecy breaks through every line of the Patriarch's blessing to his sons—supported, as it is, by the historical facts recorded in the Bible.

JOSEPH.

Jacob, having blessed the sons of the two handmaids, now turns with apparent joy to those of his beloved Rachel. Various are the views entertained by commentators in reference to this blessing—the Hebrew admitting of different constructions, which may be justified by the various events that occurred to Joseph and his descendants. We shall submit the interpretations as we find them, leaving to the reader the choice of selection. The English version runs thus:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall."

According to this translation, sanctioned by some eminent authorities in Israel, we may venture the following illustration: Joseph, from whom descended two tribes, is compared to a fruitful bough growing in a well-watered soil, and shooting forth two luxurious stems or branches. When we look at the great increase of these two sons of Joseph, the prediction of Jacob was fully accomplished. Moses, in his last blessing, when referring to the two sons of Joseph, says:

"And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh." Deut. 33 : 17.

Here Moses ascribes to Ephraim ten thousands, while to Manasseh only thousands, implying that Ephraim, though the younger of the two, would be the more numerous, as originally predicted by the Patriarch Jacob. A further proof of the fulfilment of this prophecy is found in the allotment made by Joshua at the division of the promised land among the several tribes of Israel. Some writers have observed that "*Joseph*" signifies *increase*, "*Paroth*," *beautiful, and* "*Bonous*," *daughters*. Hence, from these words they make the following paraphrase :

That Joseph shall increase more and more, as his name indicates ; his beauty shall attract the eyes of the fair sex, for the damsels ran upon the walls to see him.

That Joseph was a handsome youth, we are assured by the manner in which the sacred historian introduces him to our notice, not only beautiful in appearance, but mild and gentle in disposition, which attracted the notice of all those who formed his acquaintance. These qualifications of Joseph rendered him an object of envy and jealousy—but too often the lot of the good and the virtuous. The Patriarch thus declares :

"The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made

strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the Shepherd, the house of Israel," signifying men armed with poisoned darts of rancor and envy, alluding to Joseph's brethren, who persecuted him, and caused him so much trouble and anxiety. Laboring under the pressure of such evils, his ruin would have been unavoidable, had not the Almighty, in whom he trusted, proved his strong shield and defence, bursting his bands asunder and releasing him from a prison in which he was so unjustly placed by his master — and subsequently making him a father and protector to the house of Israel.

We would further remark, in illustration of our subject, that as Joseph's enemies are considered as archers, so in pursuance of the same metaphor, he is considered as armed also with a bow to defend himself. And this bow of his "abode in strength," or proved firm, viz.: he withstood all their malicious efforts by his faith in God, with unbroken fortitude and resolution, like the tough bow, which, though long employed in the battle, neither breaks nor becomes more flexible. "And the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob," implying that his pious trust in Divine Providence was rewarded by the protection of heaven, which is understood by the words, "the mighty God of Jacob," since Jacob himself had so often experienced his goodness and mercy. "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel," signifying that

by the ordination of the Ruler of all things, Joseph, who was at one time the shepherd youth, then a prisoner in a strange land, was released and raised to the high office of Governor in that very land, becoming the sole support of his aged father, and of the whole of his family. He is thus beautifully depicted as the *foundation* and *upholder* of Israel.

Jacob having alluded to Joseph's past troubles and present greatness, now foretells his future prosperity and achievements at the taking of the promised land, as recorded in the book of Joshua, chapter 17: 17, 18:

"And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim, and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power; thou shalt not have one lot only.

But the mountain shall be thine, for it is a wood; thou shalt cut it down; and the outgoings of it shall be thine, for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong."

The Patriarch continues to predict how all this shall come to pass, saying, "Even by the God of thy father, who shall keep thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb." This appears to be a further amplification of the following blessing, viz.: That Joseph's posterity should be situated in a fertile soil, irrigated by seasonable rain and dew from

above, and with the blessings of the deep, viz.: springs and rivers, as also with a numerous thriving progeny, as well as plenty of flocks and herds of cattle.

"The blessings of my father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." Thus prayed the Patriarch, "May all the blessings promised me, and to my forefathers, be doubled upon the crowned head; may they rise above the summit of the everlasting mountains, and prove to him more fruitful and desirable than they." That perpetuity is expressed in the Bible by the durableness of the mountains, appears from several passages. The Hebrew word which we translate *bounds*, may also be rendered *desire*. Hence, some authors are of opinion that this portion of Jacob's blessing has a twofold meaning, the durableness of the mountains, as, also, their desirable productions. In this sense it might be rendered, "Unto all that is most desirable in the ancient hills," alluding to the noble hills of Bashan and Mount Ephraim, which fell to the lot of Joseph's posterity, and which were exceedingly fruitful in grapes and olives, and other excellent fruits. This explication harmonizes with the prophetic blessings of Moses to this tribe.

"And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills." Deut. 33: 15.

In conclusion, we have to observe, that the more we peruse the prophecies and compare them with the subsequent historical accounts, the more we shall behold the spirit of God pervading them, and we are thus led to admire the piety and virtue of the venerable patriarch who predicted them.

BENJAMIN.

Benjamin, who was the last of Jacob's sons, and the great favorite of his father, no doubt expected from him a blessing much greater and more amplified than that which we find recorded. Benjamin's blessing, however, was expressed in a few words. Whether it was that Jacob foresaw no extraordinary merit in this tribe, or that it would be blended with that of Judah, and thus share in all its blessings, he contented himself with describing him only by his fierce and warlike disposition, and that wolf-like, he would shed the blood of his enemies in the early dawn of day, and at the setting of the sun divide the spoil thus obtained. In this spirit the Patriarch thus addresses his favorite child:

"Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."

We must remark here, that, though Benjamin was the youngest and darling child of Jacob, yet he gives

him no peculiar blessing, but merely describes him as he really proved to be, of a fierce and warlike temperament. A plain proof that the Patriarch was actuated by a much higher spirit than his own. He exercises no parental partiality. He speaks throughout just as it was given to him, and no more. The history of this tribe will show that it answered exactly to the character given to it by Jacob. This tribe alone, though much inferior in numbers, maintained a war with the other tribes in Israel, in which it proved the conqueror, especially in two battles, as recorded in the book of Judges, chapter 20 : 21–25.

In another place we read of the exploits of one Ehud, a Benjamite. He was a very extraordinary man. He was left-handed, yet with great dexterity he concealed a dagger under his garment with which he despatched Eglon, king of Moab, who sorely oppressed the Israelites during eighteen months. A battle was then fought between Moab and Israel, in which Moab was defeated with the loss of about ten thousand men. "So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel, and the land had rest four score years." Judges 3 : 30.

From Benjamin descended Saul, who was the first king in Israel. Saul was raised to the throne by command of God, while he was following the lowly occupation of searching after his father's lost cattle. The warlike disposition of Saul, as proved by the many battles he fought with the Philistines and the Amalekites, and in which he came off victorious—

shows plainly the truth of the prediction of the Patriarch to the progenitor of the tribe of Benjamin.

Another important feature to be noticed in this tribe, is, that it should continue to the very last times of the Jewish state and polity. We are led to this inference from the expression, morning and night, which cannot be understood in their literal sense, but must be metaphorically applied to the *morning* and *night*, or the *rise* and *fall* of the Jewish dynasty, for this appears to be the subject of the whole prophecy. And in the case of Benjamin, a longer continuance was promised him than to the other tribes—which was actually fulfilled.

At the division of the kingdom, after the death of Solomon, the tribe of Benjamin joined that of Judah, both forming one people, having Judah as its leader. In this way these two tribes survived long after the other tribes ceased to exist as a people. So we read in the first book of Kings, chapter 12: 21.

"And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and four-score thousand chosen men, which were warriors to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon."

This battle, however, was prevented by command of God, who sent Shemaiah to inform Rehoboam and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, that they should not fight against their brethren, but return peaceably to their respective homes. For, said the Lord, "this

thing is from me." The Almighty no doubt sent this prohibition to prevent the evil consequences resulting from a civil war, which at all times proves disastrous to the interests of a country. The Almighty further made it known that this rejection of Rehoboam by the Ten Tribes was suitable to his divine purpose, although incomprehensible to finite understanding. The people, therefore, dissuaded Rehoboam from engaging in warfare, stating as a reason, that it was in opposition to the Divine command, and therefore could not possibly succeed. How applicable, in the present day, are the words of an eminent scholar, who, when speaking on the subject of a civil war and its dangerous consequences, says: "Fight not against God; neither do anything to bring upon thyself new storms and tempests, but bear those that are necessary and cannot be avoided." We have already remarked how the last words of Moses, when he blessed the several tribes, corroborated those of the Patriarch Jacob in his blessings to his sons. In this instance, our theory is peculiarly happy to our purpose. Moses, when speaking of Benjamin, says:

"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." Deut. 33: 12.

The application is as follows: Benjamin, designated as the beloved of the Lord, shall dwell near him, viz.: In the Holy City of Jerusalem, which stood in the lot apportioned to this tribe. The city of Jerusalem

was built on the boundary which divided the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The south side of Jerusalem belonged to Judah, and the north side where the Temple stood, to Benjamin. Hence, it was reckoned sometimes to the one, and sometimes to the other. "And the Lord shall cover him all the day long," signifying the continuance of the tribe of Benjamin, when all the other tribes, excepting Judah, should no longer exist as a nation. Jacob foretells that Benjamin should continue to the very last period of the Jewish state; so Moses by his prophecy confirms that of Jacob. "Benjamin," says Jacob, "shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night shall divide the spoil." So Moses declares, "Benjamin shall dwell in safety, the Lord shall cover him all the day long, he shall dwell between his shoulders." The expression "all the day long," signifies the same as the *morning* and *night* in Jacob's prophecy, viz.: the rising and falling of the Jewish Polity, and refers to the promise of a longer continuance to Benjamin than to any of the other tribes as before noticed—and this was certainly fulfilled, since the tribe of Benjamin shared the same fate with that of Judah. They went together into captivity, and returned together. From which circumstance we may venture the opinion that the present race of Israel dispersed among the civilized nations of the world, are the descendants of these two tribes. And as a further illustration corroborating our views on the subject, history comes to our

aid in reference to the expressions *morning* and *night*. Morning, alluded to the prosperous state of Israel, when Saul, who subdued the surrounding nations which made war upon them first, became their king, as recorded in the first book of Samuel, chapter 14 : 47 :

"So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines, and whithersoever he turned himself he vexed them."

Night alluding to the dark period in the page of Israel's history, when their kingdom was lost, and the people carried into captivity. Yet in the days of Mordecai and Esther, who were of the tribe of Benjamin, a bright star again appeared in the horizon, to show Israel that they were not entirely forsaken nor neglected by the God of their forefathers; for, on this occasion, the very words of the Patriarch were literally fulfilled, by the overthrow of the machinations of the wicked Haman, through the instrumentality of the pious Mordecai and the good Queen Esther. To them the King Ahasuerus gave the princely mansion of his previous prime minister Haman, who had so artfully planned the destruction of God's own people. Thus clearly and effectually carrying out the prediction of Jacob—"and at *night* he shall divide the spoil," viz.: reaping the reward of the good deeds of the pious and virtuous Mordecai and Esther.

"All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is it, that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them." Genesis 49: 28.

These words plainly show, that what Jacob had said to his sons was not to be fulfilled in *their persons*, but in *their posterity*. And we may well be astonished to find Jacob so exactly foretelling the characters and dispositions of his sons' posterity—and what should befall them to the latest times, and even the very nature and location of the places of their abode, though the same was not determined upon until two hundred years from that time—and that, too, by so seemingly uncertain a manner as that of casting lots, as recorded in the book of Joshua, chapter 18: 10:

"And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh, before the Lord; and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions," signifying, according to the divisions made by the surveyors whom Joshua sent to describe the land. Taking all these things into consideration, we must be satisfied that nothing but the divine spirit, the Disposer of all events, could have enabled Jacob so exactly to foretell all these things. It is worthy of notice, here, that Jacob is said, in this verse, to have blessed all the tribes; but there seems to be no benediction bestowed on the first three tribes, unless the giving them the portion in the land of Canaan is considered the blessing alluded to. In that case, however, they shared alike with the rest of their brethren,

although not to such an extent. The fact is, that Jacob's last address to his children is not to be understood as a chapter of blessings, in the ordinary sense of a dying parent's blessing to his children—but as the foretelling of events by the spirit of prophecy, accompanied by prayers and solicitations to heaven for the future welfare of his posterity. This being done, Jacob then extended his blessing to each and every one of his children, as stated in the text, which, if carefully read, will at once clear up any seeming difficulty: "And this is it that their father spake unto them," signifying all that he had said to them in allusion to their character and disposition—and his comparing them as he did—Judah to a lion, Benjamin to a wolf, Naphtali to a hind, and so forth, and then telling them what position their posterity would hold in the world "in *the latter days*"—all this is comprehended in that portion of the text. "And blessed them, every one according to his blessing, he blessed them," signifying, that Jacob, after having concluded his prophetic mission, then proceeded to give his last blessing to each and every one of his children, without any distinction.

Thus have we, by the blessing of God, gone through the Prophetical Blessings of the Patriarch Jacob, which contain matters of the highest importance to us Israelites, especially in reference to the promised Messiah, who is to be the great harbinger of peace and perfect happiness to all mankind. And however remote the prospect may appear, let us,

like the Patriarchs of old, remember that it is the Almighty God that has promised—and as the many events recorded in the Sacred Volume were literally fulfilled in accordance with the promise made to our forefathers, we may therefore be assured that he will as certainly, in due time, fulfil all his other gracious promises, and deliver us from all the evils of this world, and favor us with an eternal inheritance in the heavens above, provided we have faith in his holy word, and by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honor, and Immortality.

AMEN.

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